A DISCOURSE
Concerning
God's Judgments;
Resolving many weighty
QUESTIONS and CASES
Relating to them.

Preached (for the substance of it) at
OLD SWINFORD
IN
WORCESTER-SHIRE:
And now published to accompany
The annexed *NARRATIVE*,
Concerning the Man whose
Hands and *Legs* lately *rotted off*:
In the neighbouring Parish of
KINGS-SWINFORD,
IN
STAFFORD-SHIRE;
Penned by another *Author*.

By *SIMON FORD*, D.D. and *Rector* of the said *Parish*.

LONDON:
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Imprimatur.

Sept. 23. *T. Turner.*

To his Honoured Friends,

THOMAS TOLEY
OF
KEDERMINSTER;
AND
PHILIP TOLEY
OF
PRESTWOOD-HALL, *Esquires.*

Honoured Sirs,

THat I joyn both your Names in one Dedication, *is not barely because you are* Brethren, *both in* Nature, *and endeared* affection *each to other: but also, because you have been, and still are so, in the particular kindnesses you have for me, and my labours. For I gratefully acknowledge, that from the free and unexpected donation of the* elder *of you, I am fixed in this Sphere wherein I now move: and from the* others *near neighbourhood I receive constant expressions of a more than ordinary value for my Ministry. And withal, knowing the great*

Influence both your Names have on thoſe parts, to the benefit of which eſpecially the following Papers are deſigned; I thought it neceſſary in the publication of them to deſire your joint-countenance in the recommendation *of them to your many* Tenants *and* Dependants. *A requeſt, which I doubt not to obtain from you, becauſe I know both your hearts are already poſſeſſed with a juſt veneration of that great Providence which occaſioned them, and an hearty deſire that all thoſe who any way relate to you may be bettered thereby.*

Which Providence, as it filled all theſe parts, and thence the whole Nation, for ſome months, with diſcourſe and wonder; and exerciſed the curioſity of all inquiſitive Perſons, whoſe occaſions brought them near the place where it was acted; and I hope hath contributed towards the edification of many of them. So the conſideration thereof excited me to attempt to render it more ſerviceable to that great End. This I endeavoured lately, by preaching ſeveral Sermons relating to that occaſion, to my own Congregation, who had generally been led either by their Curioſity, or better Motives (as it is to be hoped of divers of them) to the ſight of that ſad ſpectacle, expoſed by the Divine Majeſty to publick view ſo near their own habitations: and afterwards upon the declared opinion of divers Judicious Auditors, that they might be

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more publickly uſeful, reviewed them, and fitted them, as well as ſuch plain Country Diſcourſes could be, without wholly altering the frame of them, for the Preſs.

And this I did, the rather becauſe they were thought fit by the Reverend Author of the annexed Narrative *in particular, to accompany it into the world; which he therefore ſent to me, that I might ſo annex it; and withal, might farther aſſiſt it to the obtaining its honeſt end, by my atteſtation and recommendation.*

And the former *of theſe (though he needs it not) I do hereby readily give him, as being aſſured by unqueſtionable Teſtimony, (though I my ſelf was out of the Country, during the greateſt part of the time wherein that ſad Providence was acting) that the ſubſtance of what he relates is exactly True, and concerning the Particulars, (ſeeing they are averred upon his own Perſonal knowledge, who by occaſion of the nearneſs of his reſidence, being within the bounds of the ſame Pariſh, was the moſt frequent Viſitor of the Party whoſe condition he relates) no man can rationally doubt, who knows him, (as you both have for many years) or will but ask a character of him from you.*

The latter, *becauſe I need not give it as to you, to whom the knowledge of the* Author *himſelf ſufficiently recommends it; and yet I deſire to give it to others by you; and beg the*

some again my self from you on the behalf of the discourse prefixed, which (as being more properly mine own) I hereby consign, with my self, to your service, as being,

Honoured Sirs,

Your most affectionate and obliged Servant in the work of the Lord Jesus,

Old *Swinford*, *Sept.* 20. 1677.

SIMON FORD.

To

To the Christian Readers of this Discourse, and the annexed Narrative: Especially the Inhabitants of *Old Swinford* and *Kings-Swinford*, with the Town of *Sturbridge*, and the adjacent Parishes and Hamlets.

Christian Readers, and especially you of this Neighbourhood,

I *Suppose many (if not most) of you are already acquainted with the* Providence *which occasioned these* Papers *I now present you with: or, if any be strangers thereto, they may be informed thereof from the* Narrative *annexed. The* Reverend Author *whereof (sufficiently known to divers of you both for his ability and integrity) hath thought fit to honour me so far, as to recommend the publication of it to me, together with this* Discourse, *the substance whereof, on the same occasion, was lately preached in the hearing of a considerable number of you.*

That I direct them to you especially of this Neighbourhood, *will be a sufficient* Testimony to After-times, *that the matter of Fact to which they relate, is an undoubted Truth, seeing it dares in this manner to appear so open-faced before the whole Country where the Scene of it lay: and also a* convictive Testimony *against all those of you (if any such*

there shall be) who after so loud a call to repentance and amendment of life, shall continue in the practice of those sins for which the deceased young man *(once your Neighbour) acknowledged to so many of his Visitants, that the Divine Majesty made him a spectacle to so many hundreds (I might say thousands) for so many Months together.*

Wherefore my earnest request to you, is, that you will often recall to your memories that sad stroke, *which whilst it was* fresh News, *so affected all the* Spectators *and* Auditors *thereof; that you may not lose the good Impressions then wrought in any of you. And to help you therein, when you find them wearing off, let* this Book *be your Monitor to renew and govern them; which was the end why it was published and directed to you especially, by your* Servant in the Gospel,

S. F.

PSAL.

Psal. ix. 16. the former part.

The Lord is known by the Judgment which he executeth.

THE *Diſcourſe* that I ſhall make to you upon this *Text*, (as I ſuppoſe you will eaſily gheſs, if I ſhould not tell you) is occaſioned by as *remarkable an Inſtance* of *Gods juſt Providence*, (which moſt of you know to have lately faln out in our neighbourhood, and that ſo notoriouſly, as to fill all mens Tongues and Ears with the diſcourſe of it, and the Eyes of many hundreds, if not thouſands of them with the beholding it;) as it may be, in all the circumſtances, is *hardly to be paralleld in any Hiſtory.*

And that which induced me to make ſuch a diſcourſe on this occaſion, was, *partly*, becauſe I thought it needful (at this convenient diſtance of Time wherein the common talk concerning it as News, is almoſt ſpent) to recall it again to your thoughts in a more ſerious and edifying way; leſt it ſhould die, as to its beſt uſe among you, as *nine days wonders*, (according to the Proverb) are wont to do? And *partly*, that (ſeeing the apprehenſions of men have been ſo different, and their diſcourſes ſo various about it, moſt men judging of it according to their particular Tempers and Humours, in compliance with the Principles they are governed by;) I might, ſo far as ſuch works of God, the main ſprings whereof are concealed in his own breaſt, may be underſtood

ſtood by us, help you in ſome competent meaſure ſo to underſtand it, as to turn it to your greateſt benefit and advantage: And *Laſtly*, that having now gained the ſight of a juſt and impartial *Narrative* of that ſad Story from a *Reverend Perſon* of great Integrity, and a diligent enquirer into all the circumſtances thereof, (to moſt of which he was an eye and ear-witneſs), I might diſpoſe you to receive it when it comes to *publick view* with more readineſs, and give it the *better entertainment*, being inſtructed before how to make uſe of it.

And the *Text* I have choſen for this purpoſe, is *part* of a *Verſe* made remarkable by *two muſical words* in the cloſe of it; which, though Interpreters agree not in the expounding of them, yet they generally concur in this, that they have ſomething extraordinary in them, [*viz. Higgaion, Selah.*] For, whatever the *latter* may mean; or whether it be a bare *Note* in *Muſick*, which is an undetermined diſpute: the *former* of them, by the ſignification of the * *root* whence it is derived, evidently recommends to us a matter of *ſerious meditation*.

* Ab הגה locutus eſt ore; vel corde, meditatus eſt.

And ſuch indeed the *Verſe* is, being a ſolemn and weighty *atteſtation* of the holy *Pſalmiſt* to the *Divine Providence*, upon occaſion of ſome remarkable appearance of it, on the behalf of his Church againſt ſome of their heathen Enemies; which is the ſubject of the preceding part of the *Pſalm*: the account whereof he ſeals up with this *Epiphonematical Inſtruction* to all the world, [*The Lord is known by the Judgment which he executeth*] and eſpecially, by this oftentimes moſt remarkable circumſtance accompanying it, that he makes offenders themſelves the executioners thereof upon themſelves, and *entangles them in the work of their own hands*.

From the *former part* of which *Divine Teſtimonial*,

(as I may properly call it) I intend, on this occasion, to handle this *plain observation.*

That Gods publick signal Judgments upon any offender or offenders are evident Testimonies by which he is known to mankind. Doct.

In the handling of which *Observation*, I shall endeavour these *seven* things:

1. To shew you, what I mean, by these *publick signal Judgments of God upon offenders.*

2. To evince, by such evidence, as I hope will be satisfactory to all rational men, that *there are some such penal strokes* inflicted by God on offenders in this life, as deserve the name of *signal Divine Judgments*; and that such events are not (as *Atheists* pretend) the meer products of *chance*, or *casualty.*

3. To prove, that *God is* (or ought to be) *known by such Judgments as these.*

4. To explain, *what of God it is*, which may be, and usually is made *known* by them.

5. To give you the proper *Characters*, by which such *Divine Judgments* are differenced from *like Providences* befalling men on other accounts.

6. To direct you in the *application* of such *Judgments* to particular persons and cases, so as that you may not offend against *Justice* or *Charity.*

7. And lastly, to close up this whole Discourse with some *useful practical Inferences.*

I. *First*, To shew you, [*What I mean by these publick signal Judgments of God on offenders.*] And here you are first to understand, that *Gods Judgments* in the notion of the Holy Scriptures, are of *two sorts*, to wit, His *Judicia* { *Judicantia*, & *Judicata.*

1. His *Judicia Judicantia*, or *Judgments pronounced* in the Sentence of his *Law*, dooming offenders to such penalties for their offences against it. And

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it is usual with the Scripture to call the *Laws* of God, on this account, *his Judgments*, and to joyn them with *Statutes*, as words of like import, as I could shew in very many places.

2. His *Judicia Judicata*, or *Judgments* (in the phrase of the Text) *executed*, which are the former dooms actually inflicted; and are therefore called by the name of those, according to which they do befall men. Now, though it be true, that no *evil of suffering* befalls any sinner, but what (to speak properly) is such a *Judgment of God*, because all evils penal are before denounced in Gods Law, which every sinner breaks: yet the Scripture is not wont to call them all by that name. For that is usually applyed to those *penal strokes* of God, which have some special Characters of his *Vindictive Justice* upon them; to wit, something in the *nature* of them, that is not ἀνθρώπινον, *common to men*; or in the *Circumstances*, something of surprizing suddenness from the unexpectedness or unlikelyhood of their befalling men, in respect of the Time, Place, Condition, Imployment, Company, &c. or something unusual in the *Instrument*, by which, or *manner* in which they are inflicted, &c. and especially, if there be any thing in them, that appears to be either *above*, or *contrary* to, or but *besides* the wonted course of *Nature*, and so is either *miraculous*, or *prodigious*.

Now these Two, are either inflicted on sinners in a *private* way, so as few or none know of them, but such as feel them, and those who are intimately conversant with them: or else they are laid on them in a *publick notorious manner*, (as the Judgments amongst us pronounced upon great offenders are wont to be executed) so as to call in, and invite Spectators to behold them. And such *Judgments*, as these last, the Text must be meant of; and of

such

ſuch I deſire to be underſtood, in what follows on this Argument.

And this ſhall ſuffice for my *firſt* undertaking.

II. The *ſecond* deſerves to have more Time ſpent on it, becauſe it contains the *main foundation* of the whole following Diſcourſe. For, if there be *no ſuch Judgments executed* by God at all; but *Time and Chance*, (in this caſe as well as others) not only *happen to all*, but *govern all* too: then there can be *no knowledge* of *God* drawn from them. Yea, if there be no ſuch things as *Divine Judgments*; then the very *God* they are ſuppoſed to atteſt to, (which is that the *Atheiſt* would have) may, for all their Teſtimony, *not be*. Whereas, if we evince by Reaſon, that *any*, though never ſo *few*, of thoſe Events, cannot be produced but by a Divine Providence; we do both prove the *being* of ſuch a *Providence*, and withal vindicate Religion, from the imputation of being ſuperſtitious, in attributing *all others* of like nature to the *ſame cauſe*. Eccleſ. 9. 11.

And therefore on *this Head*, I take my ſelf to be obliged to make good theſe *Two* things.

1. *That there are ſome penal Events which can by no rational Perſon be juſtly attributed to meer chance or caſualty, or any like cauſe not capable of choice or deſign, in its actings.*

2. *That ſuch penal Events, as theſe, muſt therefore be the effects of a Providence, and that Providence Divine.*

I. The *firſt* of theſe Propoſitions, I prove by the following Arguments.

1. There are ſome *penal Events* befalling men in this world, which have been punctually *threatned* and *foretold*, as they have in the Iſſue faln out: and many of them ſo threatned and foretold in the very *Circumſtances*, with which they were accompanied in the Event. As for inſtance,

(1.) In

(1.) In reference to the *generality of Mankind*. So in the *first Threatning* annexed to the Law given to our *first Parents* in Paradise; the daily experience of all Humane Nature, (taken notice of by *Heathens* themselves) shews it to have been punctually fulfilled, in the *corruption* and *calamities* generally befalling the whole race of Men. And that other, in the Law given to *Noah*, that *whosoever sheds mans blood, by man shall his blood be shed*; is continually (in the almost miraculous discoveries of *Murders*, and bringing Murderers to condign punishment) verified in the observation of the generality of Mankind to this very day. As also is that, of the wonderful ways by which *Conspiracies* against *Sovereign Princes* are brought to light, according to the notable threatning to that purpose, *Eccles.* 10. 20.

Gen. 2. 17.

Gen. 9. 6.

(2.) And in reference to *particular Persons*, and *Nations*. So in the exclusion of *Moses* and *Aaron* from *Canaan*, it is taken notice of expresly in the account given of their deaths, (of *Aarons*, by *Moses*, his own Brother, and of *Moses* his own, by him that fills up his Story after his decease) that it fell out to both of them according to what God had denounced. And it were easie to add many more of the same kind, to particular Persons. But, that of the *old Prophet* to the *disobedient Prophet* at *Bethel*; that of *Elisha* to the *incredulous Lord* in Samaria; those of *Elijah* and *Micaiah* to *Ahab* and *Jezebel*, shall suffice, instead of all the rest, whereof the Historical part of Scripture is full, because they are so notoriously evident, to all that know the *Bible*.

See, and compare Num. 20. 12, 27, 28. 24. 27. 12. 15. Deut. 32. 49. 34. 5.

1 Kings 13. 2 Kings 7. 19, 20. 2 Kings 21. 19. 23. 22, 28.

And as to *Nations*. To omit the long Catalogue of all the *plagues of Egypt*, threatned and inflicted in the *circumstances* mentioned in the relation of them: that one *great Instance* of the often foretold *Captivity* of the whole *Jewish* Nation; is so observable, and so attested beyond all exception by the *publick*

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Records of that Nation held to this day by all their Posterity in veneration, that there is no more (nay not so much) cause to doubt it, then there is, that *England* was conquered by *William the Norman*.

I shall close this Argument with *two Instances*, so punctual in a circumstance of all others most unlikely to be lighted on by chance; that I know not what can be objected against them to invalidate the force of them, but an Exception against the *Records* themselves, whence they are taken: to which I shall therefore add a word or two anon.

The *one*, is that of the Judgment denounced against *Jeroboams Altar*, and the Priests that offered on it, to be executed (as it was) by *Josiah*, mentioned by his very Name, about 300 *years* before the performance. 1 Kings 13. 2. 2 Kings 23. 16.

The *other*, is that of the destruction of *Babylon* (in order to the restitution of the *Jewish* Nation;) wherein *Cyrus* is also, by his very Name, foretold to be the Person that (as he did) was to effect it. Which Prophesie, by the learned *Grotius* his computation, was uttered 170 *years*, and by that of *Junius* and others, above 200, before he accomplished it, or probably was in being. And the very *manner* how he was to take that great Imperial City, (to wit, by the turning away and drying up *Euphrates*) is so lively described by the Prophet *Jeremy*; that the Heathen Authors, (*Herodotus*, and others) who give us an account of the event, justifie the verification of the prediction the same way. Isa. 44. ult. & 45. 1, 2. Jer. 50. 38. 51. 31, 32.

Now in these and the like *Predictions* of future Events, with such circumstances, there is no man but must allow a greater *certainty*, (with respect to the *causes* on which they depend) then there can be in any products of *meer Casualty*. Which is my *first Argument*.

2. The

2. The *second* is this. There are *Instances* of some *penal Events*, that have been brought upon offenders in a way of *formal Proceeding*; yea, such as is usual even in *Humane Judicatures*. For Instance. When *Joshua* had forbidden the embezelling any part of the spoil of *Jericho* under the penalty of a *Divine Curse*, *Achan*, the offender, falls under the danger of it: Upon the discomfiture of the Host before *Ai*, enquiry is made after the unknown Transgressor of that Law. Then he is found out by the direction of a *four-fold Lot*, that brought all the people (down to his very family) under a scrutiny, till the Lot takes him. Then follows his Examination, Confession, Judgment, and Execution. And not much unlike was the *Process*, by which *Jonah* was *cast into the Sea*, and there imprison'd in the *belly* of a *Whale*, till his Repentance procured his Release. Now, abating the extraordinary way of discovery in these two cases; the rest of the *Procedure* in these Judgments is formed *Methodically*, according to the order of Humane Justice. And must these proceedings (in so exact a *Method* too) be attributed to meer *Casualty*? May not the persons who have the confidence to assert this, as well affirm that Malefactors are *hanged* at *Tyburn* by meer *Casualty*, when they have been seized by order of Law, committed to *Newgate* by warrant, tryed at the *Sessions-house*, and having received their Sentence upon the Verdict of a Jury, been conducted to the place of Execution, and there turned off the Cart, by the known Officers thereunto by Law appointed?

Josh. 6. 18. 7. 16, 17, 18.

Jon. 1.

3. My *third Argument* is this. In the actual punishing of offenders, many times the *Instruments* made use of have been *irrational Creatures*; and yet have by an *unknown Influence* been directed to act, as if they were governed by Principles of *Justice*,

as well as *Reason:* as putting an evident *discrimination* and *difference* betwixt them and the innocent, when both of them have equally been within their Power. In the famous case of the plagues of *Egypt*, how came the *Frogs*, the *Flies*, the *Hail*, and the *Plague*, &c. to seize only the Houses, Cattle, bodies of *Egyptians*, and not touch an *Israelite*, or any of his concerns, when (as it appears, by the *order* for the *sprinkling of the Jews houses* with the *blood of the Paschal Lamb* for distinction) they lived, for the most part, and conversed intermixedly each with other? How was it, that the *waters* of the *Red Sea stood as a wall* on both sides, whilst the *Israelites* were marching through it; and returned to their course, so soon as they came on dry land, to overwhelm *Pharaoh* and *his Host*, who were in pursuit of them? When the *three glorious Confessours* were adjudged to the *fiery Furnace* by *Nebuchadnezzar*, whence came it that the *fire* (so ragingly hot as it was) abstained from *touching* so much as one *hair of their heads*, or *singing* their *Garments*, and to burn only their *bonds* asunder, and set them at liberty to *walk* in it, who were cast in *bound*? and yet to *lick* up and devour (even *without* the *mouth of the Furnace*) those who *cast them in?* And when *Daniel* himself was cast into the *Lions Den*, and lodged among them in the *bottom of the Den*, one whole night, whence was it, that the hungry and cruel beasts did not the *least hurt to him*; and yet the very *same Lions*, when his *Accusers* and their Relations were cast in thither, *had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces, before they came to the bottom of the Den?* Lastly, (to name no more Examples of this nature) when the *Lion*, according to the prediction of the *old Prophet* at *Bethel*, slew the *Man of God* that against Gods Commandment had *eaten and*

Exod. 12. 22.

Exod. 14.

Dan. 3. 22. to 27.

Dan. 6. 22, 23, 24.

1 Kings 13.

 drunk

drunk there; was he directed by meer *chance* ſo to do? Did he (being hungry, and ſeeking for Prey) light on him *caſually* only? If ſo, why (according to the uſual wont of ſuch beaſts of prey, as they obſerve who have been in thoſe Countries, to forbear falling on *Men*, but when they can light on no other food) did he not ſeize on his *Aſs* rather; but kill *him*, and not touch his *Aſs*, that (as unconcerned in the danger) was afterwards found
Verſe 28. *ſtanding by his ſide*? Why did he only kill him, and not *devour* him, and then withdraw to his Den: but rather chooſe to *ſtand by him*, as reſolved to avouch the fact: and that all the while the news was carrying to the City, and came by report to the old Prophet, and his Horſe ſadling, and he and his company travelling to the place of that ſad ſpectacle? And when they came, why did he ſuffer them to carry away his prey ſo tamely as it ſeems he did? Do theſe things look like meer *Caſualties*? Is it not rather evident, that ſuch Agents acting ſo differently from their own nature and inclination, (ſo as to puniſh only the guilty, and ſingle them out among others equally within their reach) were directed by an *Intelligent Cauſe*, by whoſe order and Commiſſion they made this difference? And this is our *ſecond* Propoſition to be proved upon this Head; [*That ſeeing theſe things cannot fall out by meer chance, or any thing elſe of like nature, they muſt be governed by Divine Providence*] which I make good by theſe *ſteps* of *rational Argumentation*. Such Events as fall not out by *chance*, fall out according to *choice* or *contrivance*. That choice and contrivance (in matter of puniſhment) muſt either be the choice and contrivance of the *Suffierer* or *Inflicter*. *Suffierers* are not wont to chooſe and contrive their own harms: but rather to avoid, and uſe what means they can to guard themſelves from them.

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If the *Inflicter* (then) chooſe and contrive the puniſhmenes mentioned; then, as the contrivance argues him to be a *rational Being*; ſo the bringing his contrivances to paſs by ſuch Inſtruments as have been mentioned, and with ſuch certainty, argues him to be ſuch a *Being*, as hath a *predominant power* over *Nature* it ſelf: which can be no other then *Divine*; and theſe effects mentioned, and the like, can be no other then the products of his *Infinite Power* and *Wiſdom*, as you will ſee more anon.

Againſt the *force* of theſe *Arguments*, I cannot imagine how the *Atheiſt* can guard his Principles, but by excepting againſt the *Evidence* of the *matter of fact* in the Inſtances before mentioned: Seeing there is no clear proof of them, in moſt of the caſes, but from the *H. Scriptures*; which, though we own and reverence, yet he looks on with contempt and ſcorn, as not owning the *Authority* we allow them.

But he ought to conſider, that it is not in this whole proceſs of Argumentation in *Queſtion* before us, *whether theſe writings be divinely inſpired or no?* There is, herein, no other eſteem required to be given them, by him, but only what is due to *credible Hiſtories*. And it is enough for our preſent purpoſe, if they can juſtifie themſelves to be *true Records* of thoſe matters which fell out in thoſe Ages which they undertake to account for. And ſo much I can hardly imagine, how any man can have the forehead to deny: conſidering that they have all thoſe *Motives* of *credibility* for them, (with the advantage of *indiſputable Antiquity*, and the having been *owned* by ſo great a part of the *World* for ſo many *Ages*) which *other Hiſtories* whatſoever can pretend to. Whence it muſt appear to all unbiaſſed Judges, that he that will allow (upon the Motives mentioned) *Plutarch*, and *Thucydides*, and *Livy*,

and *Tacitus*, and other ſuch *Hiſtorians* to be competent witneſſes of the matters of fact related by them; muſt needs be governed by prejudice rather then Reaſon, if he deny the ſame to *Moſes* and other Jewiſh Hiſtorians, concerning the matters falling out among them, who are, and have been always in greater eſteem in their own Nation, (who beſt knew their own ſtory) then thoſe mentioned ever were either in *Greece* or *Rome*.

But if yet (notwithſtanding all that hath been ſaid to the coutrary) the *Atheiſt* will ſtill perſiſt in denying the *matters of fact* upon which the former Arguments are bottomed, becauſe they are (for the greateſt part) only recorded in *that book*, which it is the Intereſt of his Irreligion to disbelieve: What will he ſay to *two Inſtances*, (which I have purpoſely reſerved to this place, becauſe they are ſo *great*, as to prove themſelves to be the effects of a Divine Providence; and becauſe they are confirmed by ſeveral *Heathen* Authors too, as well as related in the Holy Scripture) I mean the *univerſal Deluge*, and the deſtruction of *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*? For if theſe Inſtances *de facto* be true; to which there is ſuch a concurring Evidence; he will find it very difficult to perſuade himſelf, (that I ſay not others) that ſo *vaſt a quantity of waters* as ſo covered all the face of the earth, and overflowed the *higheſt Mountains*, could be collected by any power leſs then *Divine*; and much leſs, come together by chance: and will be no leſs puzled, to ſhew by what inferior Agent ſuch a *fire* as burnt thoſe *Cities* could be kindled; and burn with that vehemence, as to preſerve its remembrance without alteration in a *Lake* of ſulphurous water for ſo many thouſand years; (though that Lake continually for ſo long together hath ſwallowed all the Streams of ſo great a River as *Jordan* falling into it)

Vid. H. Grot. Annot. ad libros ſuos de ver. Rel. Chr.

it) which is the conſtant wonder of all Travellers to this day.

And ſo I diſcharge my *ſecond* undertaking, to prove, [*That there are ſome ſuch Judicial Providences that have been executed by God.*]

III. I come now to the *third*, to ſhew, [*That God is, or ought to be, known by them*] as he that works them upon that deſign. And here I ſhall be but brief, as indeed I need not to be large in a matter ſo plain and evident both from Reaſon and Scripture. For (1.) in *Reaſon*, what can be the end of Sovereign Providence in ſuch extraordinary appearances, but to manifeſt it ſelf and its Author? An end, for which even men are wont to do thoſe great things which at any time they have attained to, in publick Theaters, or other great concourſes of people, as our Saviours kindred tell him. (2.) And the *Scripture* alſo declareth no leſs in other places. So, when the Royal Pſalmiſt prophetically imprecateth thoſe dreadful Judgments which make up the greateſt part of the 83. *Pſalm*; in the *laſt* Verſe he aſſigns the intended uſe of them to all the world; to wit, *That men may know that he alone whoſe Name is* Jehovah, *is the moſt High over all the Earth?* And God himſelf is elſewhere brought in, upon the *Deſolations which he had made* by his penal Providences *in the Heathen world* for oppreſſing his people, as calling on all men to *behold thoſe his works, and be ſtill*, (*i. e.* to ceaſe from farther hoſtilities againſt his Intereſts) as *knowing* by experience already dearly bought, that *he is God*, and (will they, nill they) reſolved to be ſo, and *to be exalted in the earth.*

Jo. 7. 4.

Pſal. 83. ult.

Pſal. 96. 8, 9, 10.

In a word, (to add no more Texts for proof of that which almoſt every Page in the Bible atteſts unto) the whole Church are by the Author of the *Apocalyps* repreſented (upon ſuch notable Judicial Providences) as *ſinging the Song of* Moſes *and the Lamb*,

(*i. e.* a Christian Song, like that of *Moses* after the *drowning of the Egyptians*) and therein instructing all the world in this Duty. *Who* (say they) *shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorifie thy Name; for all Nations shall come and worship before thee, for thy Judgments are made manifest?* Even as *Moses* and the *Israelites* in the *Song* to which this is parallel, infer from the Judgments of God on *Pharaoh* and his Host, *Who is like thee, O Lord, among the Gods? Who is like thee, glorious in Holiness, fearful in Praises,* (or the Actions whence thou gathereſt thy Praiſe) *doing Wonders?* And this opens the way to my *fourth* Head.

Rev. 15. 3, 4.

Exod. 15. 11.

IV. The Enquiry concerning [*What of God it is, which is known or to be known by theſe ſignal Judgments?*]

And to this *Enquiry* I anſwer *Two* things.

1. His *Being*, and Exiſtence. [*That there is a God.*] For he that *executeth Judgment* ſo, as no finite limited Being, no created Power can, muſt needs be a *Supreme uncreated Being*; that is, *God*. And this is an Argument ſo ſtrongly concluſive againſt the *Atheiſt*, that he is forced (to ſecure his Principles) to fly to that *ſorry refuge of lyes*, which I have before refuted; to buoy up his reputation among thoſe who know not the difference betwixt Reaſon and Noiſe, and judge no diſputant baffled, that hath any thing to ſay, though what he ſays be next to nothing. For, as he that is a meer *ſtranger* in *England*, if yet he ſee *Courts of Judicature*, conſtantly kept in the *Kings Name*, and Criminals continually puniſhed by a Power deputed and commiſſioned by him; cannot rationally doubt, *whether there be a King in* England: ſo neither can any man, with any colour of Reaſon, ſeeing Gods Judicial Providences continually executing his known Laws, make it a Queſtion, *Whether there be a God*

that

that judgeth the Earth. Thus is *Jehovah known by his Judgments, to be Jehovah.*

2. His eminent *Divine Perfections* and *Glorious Attributes* are illustriously manifested by his *Judgments executed.* As for Instance,

(1.) His *Justice*; Which in these remarkable Providences always justifies it self; as ordinarily lighting upon those offenders, concerning whom not only their own Consciences, (as in the confession of *Pharaoh himself*, crying out [*The Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked*] Exod. 9. 27.) but also the whole world are, or may be, abundantly satisfied they have *deserved* it: yea, and among them, even they who not only *commit those crimes* which they see punished in others, but promote them, by *shewing the pleasure they take in those that do them*, yet *know that they who do such things are worthy of death*; and approve the Judgment of God, even in those Sentences and Executions wherein they themselves are implicitly condemned. Rom. 1. ult.

(2.) His *Mercy* and *Goodness*; In many particulars. As 1. when he *spares* so *many* for every *one* that he smites, though equally criminal: and is as remarkable in his patience and long-suffering to some, as he is in his severity to others. 2. In *punishing less then mens iniquities deserve*, by how much the greatest temporal suffering, that can be, is less than *Hell.* 3. In making the *greatest evils* men suffer here, occasions and means to preserve them from *greater Judgments* hereafter. 4. And *lastly*, in making his severities to the *worst* of men the means of signal preservations and deliverances to those that are eminently good; and shewing thereby, that he as well *knows how to deliver the righteous*, as to *punish the wicked.* Ezra 9. 13. 2 Pet. 2. 9.

(3.) His *Omnipotent Power*, and *Sovereign Greatneſs*, whilſt [1.] he reacheth thoſe Malefactors that are too *high* for *Humane Juſtice*, and pride themſelves in their uncontrolableneſs by Humane Laws. Thus, by his dealing with *Pharaoh*, who would own *no Lord* but himſelf, he draws an acknowledgement from *Jethro*, that *he was greater than all Gods, becauſe in the thing wherein* the proud Tyrant and his people *dealt proudly, he was above them.* And [2.] whilſt he ſummons in the *poſſe* of the *whole Creation* to bring ſuch *over-ſized Malefactors* to Execution, and arms the very meaneſt and moſt contemptible of them, (as *flies*, and *lice*, and *frogs*) with weapons to ſubdue and conquer them. And [3.] laſtly, whilſt he ſometimes makes a kind of *new Creation*, to ſerve his juſt ends, by altering the very courſe of Nature. as in the general deluge, when the very *Fountains of the great Deep were broken up, i. e.* The waters which were in the bowels of the Earth, with thoſe of the vaſt Ocean it ſelf, left their proper ſeat naturally appointed for them, and *came up to cover the face of the Earth.*

Exod. 5. 2.

Exod. 18. 11.

Gen. 7. 11.

(4.) His *Verity* or *Truth*; Often, in the performance of *particular* threatnings and predictions in particular caſes, as thoſe before mentioned: and always, (even in them too) in fulfilling the *general Curſes* and denunciations of his wrath againſt the Tranſgreſſors of his Laws. So that men are hereby convinced, that his *Judgments* are not only *righteous*, but *true.*

Apoc. 15. 3. 16. 7. 19. 2.

(5.) His *Omniſcience*, or certain knowledge of all the Words and Actions of men, though never ſo much concealed in all imaginable ſecreſie: and yet oftentimes by the proceſs of his Judicial Providences he brings them to light. For (1.) by them he ſometimes draws out of the boſoms of offenders, by their *own Confeſſion*, (as in the caſes of *Achan*, *Jonah*,

Jonah, and others) those things which were not otherwise discoverable. And (2.) by strange and unusual accidents he sets the *inquisitive humor* of men on work, to lay *odd* and *uncouth passages* and circumstances together, till at last they make a sufficient *concurrent Evidence*, to convict Malefactors of secret and unknown Crimes; than which there is nothing more usual in ordinary *Courts* of *Justice*. So that it comes frequently to pass, as *Zophar* observes, that *the Heavens first reveal mens iniquities, and then the earth rises up against them.* Job 20. 27.

(6.) And *lastly*, (not to multiply more particulars on this Head) his *Infinite Wisdom*, and most *Prudent Counsel*; whereby he manageth those penal Providences so, as to out-wit the wisest of men, when they imploy all their Policy to secure themselves: by which he shews himself *wonderful in Counsel*, and gives the world daily occasion *wisely to consider his doings*, to find out the admirable contexture of the wheels and springs, by which that great Engine is moved, which *takes the wise in their own craftiness*, and *snares the wicked* (as the following part of my Text expresseth it) *in the work of their own hands.* Psal. 64. 9. Job 5. 13.

And in many of those great works, when Ages have studied them all they can, yet still there is something remaining undiscoverable to exercise the wonder of the most curious Enquirers, and make them cry out with the holy Apostle, *O the depth! How unsearchable are Gods Judgments, and his ways past finding out!* And this shall suffice to be spoken to my *fourth* Head. Rom. 11. 33.

V. The *fifth* follows, to wit, To give you the best account I can, of [*The distinguishing Characters by which such Divine Judgments are differenced from like Providence befalling men upon other Accounts.*]

The

The reaſon of which diſquiſition is, becauſe God many times either actively inflicts, or (at leaſt) paſſively permits *great* afflicting *evils*, to befall men, yea, the *beſt men*; which are not to be ranked by us under this Head of *Judicial Executions*, as being intended by God to promote holy Deſigns of his own of quite a different Nature, and tendency.

Now in the purſuance of this *great Enquiry*, I ſhall *firſt* adventure to your conſideration ſome *general obſervations concerning Divine Judgments*, which may conduce to the governing our ſelves in it with due caution: and then give you the *Characters* I promiſed.

1. The *general obſervations* are theſe.

[1.] That ſuch *publick ſignal Judgments* as my Text and Doctrine ſuppoſe, are a ſort of Divine Providences which God doth more *rarely* than is ordinarily believed, exhibit to the world. For he himſelf calls the execution of Judgment in ſuch publick and notorious manner, *his ſtrange work*. And (ſpeaking after the manner of men) tells us, 'tis that which he *doth not willingly*, *i. e.* not of his own natural propenſion, but upon the urgency of ſome ſpecial occaſions, which indiſpenſably require it. Wherefore it is, that the obliging Inſtances of his Mercy and Bounty, his Patience and long ſuffering, and other expreſſions of his *Goodneſs*, (his moſt natural Attribute) are the *daily* and *hourly* exerciſe of his Providence: but thoſe other harſh and unwelcome Iſſues of it (like *unnatural Births*) are produced but now and then. And that (1.) *partly*, becauſe this world is not properly *ſeculum Mercedis*, the ſeaſon for the *revelation of the righteous Judgment of God*, *wherein to render to every man according to his works*; but that buſineſs is reſerved for the world to come, and the *Day in which he hath appoin-*

Iſa. 28. 21.
Lam. 3. 33.
Rom. 2. 9.

appointed to judge the world by the man whom he hath ordained: and he thinks it (therefore) not fit to leſſen the expectation thereof, by a ſeeming *anticipation* of the imployment proper thereunto: and (2.) *partly*, becauſe he is deſirous to keep up the juſt *value* of ſuch great occurrences by the *rarity* of them; which if they were common, would grow into like diſeſteem with other things that come under daily obſervation: and (3.) *partly*, becauſe, as a *bountiful Benefactor*, he is not willing to ſtreighten his liberality to the very worſt of men; but to give them a plentiful ſhare of the *good things* of this life, whoſe *portion* is laid out *here:* And *laſtly*, becauſe it conduceth to the *glory* of his *Juſtice* in another world, to give bad men (of themſelves inclined to grow inſolent upon his forbearance) the occaſion of *hardening their hearts in evil*, by not *executing Sentence againſt every wicked work ſpeedily.* Acts 17. 31. Luke 16. 25. Pſal. 17. 14. Eccleſ. 8. 11.

[2.] That it is highly probable, that theſe ſorts of unuſual Providences are yet *rarer* in the *latter Ages* of the world, than in the *earlier:* and under the *Goſpel*, and among *Chriſtians*, then under the *Law*, and among the *Jews*. Becauſe there was in thoſe times more occaſion for them, and uſe of them, than now there is. Before the *Scripture* in any part was written, *Tradition*, with the reliques of the *light of Nature*, ſometimes aſſiſted with *extraordinary Revelation*, was the *Rule* whereby the world was governed. But becauſe the *two former* were much corrupted, and the *third* afforded but now and then to a few eminently good men; the generality had need to be often taught their Duty, as Gedeon *taught the men of* Succoth *with thorns and briars*, ſharp and ſevere Providences. And even after ſo much of it was written, as ſerved to govern the *Jewiſh Church* under that Adminiſtration, Judges 8. 16.

God

God was pleaſed to keep up ſtill, in great part, the ſame Method of adminiſtring his Kingdom upon earth by exemplary Providences. As (probably) conſidering, (1.) that what was ſo written, was to be kept among them to whom it did principally *pertain*; and that the reſt of the world was to be left generally in the ſame condition they were in before. And (2.) that (by the difference put betwixt the *Jews* and them, by a peculiar *diſcriminating Religion*) the reſt of the world were generally like to be exaſperated againſt them; ſo, that had they not been kept in awe by ſuch penal Providences now and then, they would continually have been attempting the extirpation of a ſort of men ſo odious: and had not the *Jews* themſelves been encouraged in their *ſingular Religion*, by ſuch frequent miraculous appearances of God for the puniſhment of their perſecutors, they would have been the more tempted to have purchaſed their peace with their Neighbours, by waving their Religious obſervations to purchaſe their good will. And (3.) that this Law, to the *Jews* themſelves, was for the moſt part *like a book ſealed*; in that the greateſt encouragements to obedience, (the great *Promiſes* of the *Goſpel*) were obſcured under dark expreſſions, and typical ſhadows, till the *vail on* Moſes *his face was taken away by Chriſt*, and *life and immortality by him were brought to light*: and therefore even they had ſtill much need to be quickned to their duty by ſenſible Motives. And (4.) *laſtly*, that they were, by the very conſtitution and temper of the Nation, a very *ſtiff-necked* and unmanageable People; and ſo not eaſily to be kept in obedience by bare *written Rules*, without a *Rod* of ſevere *Temporal Judgments*, frequently laid on the backs of ſome amongſt themſelves, to keep the reſt in awe.

Rom. 9. 4.

2 Cor. 3. 14. 2 Tim. 1. 10.

And

And if we alſo conſider theſe Particulars, (as God probably did) and ſome others that might be ſuggeſted of the like nature; we may very well (I think) be ſatisfied, that if we do *not now hear* of ſuch *frequent notorious Executions* of Divine Juſtice as then were the *ſtate* of the *Church* ſince *Chriſt*, and that Church ſpread over all the world; the *clearneſs* and *perſpicuity* of his Doctrine in the main inducements to a good life; and the more plentiful effuſions of *the Holy Spirit upon all fleſh* to produce a more filial obedience thereunto; render it leſs neceſſary that we *ſhould do ſo:* Eſpecially, ſeeing we have all thoſe great Inſtances of Divine ſeverity which were exhibited in thoſe ancient Ages, delivered down even to us *upon whom the ends of the world are come*, by holy Pen-men in writing, *for our admonition.* 1 Cor. 10. 11.

[3.] That the *certain Interpretation* of ſuch rare Judicial Providences, when they now adays fall out, is to us in theſe latter Times more *difficult*, than it was to the men of thoſe days, in which they were more frequent. The Reaſon whereof is, becauſe God, ſince the *Scriptures* were compleated, and generally received, hath put a *ſtop* to that *Spirit of Propheſie*, which in former Times raiſed up Prophetical Men, to predict and threaten Judgments before they came, and interpret them infallibly when they came. So that the moſt perfect Judgment we can now make of them, though we uſe all the means left us to that purpoſe with the greateſt and moſt conſcientious exactneſs, will fall very ſhort of *Infallibility*, and amount, at moſt, only to a great *Moral certainty*, in moſt caſes of that nature.

[4.] That it is therefore very *eaſie* to *miſtake* in this affair, and be deceived by the making ſuch *Interpretations* of Divine Providences of this nature

as

as *Phancy* and *Paſſion*, (continually ready herein to interpoſe) may be apt to ſuggeſt to us: and the moſt of men (and too many good men too) are very prone to be miſled by them themſelves, and to miſlead others.

[5.] That ſuch errours and miſtakes, are not more *eaſie* and *frequent*, than (as they are commonly made uſe of) *ſinful* and *dangerous*. Becauſe, by our aptneſs to avouch them, and (in a ſort) impoſe them on the belief of others, we too often render our ſelves guilty of *prophaning Gods Name*, (of which his great works are a conſiderable part) by ſtamping our own fond conceits with his *Image* and *Superſcription*, which is no leſs a crime in this caſe *againſt God*, than the minting and vending adulterate Coin in worldly dealings and payments is to the *temporal Prince*, under whom we live.

[6.] And yet, *laſtly*, (notwithſtanding all that hath been ſaid to beget a new caution in us in a matter of ſo great an import) I muſt avouch, that I do not believe God hath *altogether tyed up his hands* from executing ſignal Judgments, even in *theſe days*, or in thoſe Regions where the *Goſpel* is preached with greateſt clearneſs and moſt powerful Evidence: Eſpecially, in caſe the *ſubſtantial corruptions* of ſo pure a Religion be at any time ſo groſs, or the general *debauchery* of mens lives under ſuch excellent Inſtructions be ſo foul and ſcandalous to the holy Doctrine of our Saviour, as to call for them: and when any new *Impieties* of the largeſt dimenſions, and prodigious *Immoralities*, become bold and audacious beyond the examples of the former Ages of Chriſtianity, (with impunity, if not countenance and encouragement, from thoſe that ought to ſuppreſs them) among thoſe that are the noted Profeſſors of it. Nor do I think that we

are,

are, in such cases, so destitute of direction, *partly*, from parallel Instances of Scripture; and *partly*, from the general motions of Mankind in all Ages concerning such Providences; and *partly*, from the concurring Evidence of the circumstances of them when they so fall out, *&c.* but that we may, even in these days, by the *ordinary assistance* of Gods *Spirit* (even without a Revelation) discern sufficient marks and tokens of Divine Judgments upon many of them, to lay a foundation for the improvement of them to the ends which God generally designs by them, both to our selves and others. For a *moral certainty*, in such matters wherein a Duty is to be inferred from the various accidents of this life, hath (to us) the force of a *Divine Command*: A Principle, which if it be not owned, we must necessarily be endangered to be governed, in most of the ordinary actions of our present callings and imployments, by that *wild* and *extravagant Rule* of *expecting special Scripture-determinations* in all the particularities of our worldly conditions; which no sober man will own as the measure to govern his Actions by.

2. And such (in the *second* place) as I have described, I hope, will the *characters* of remarkable Divine Judgments be, that follow.

(1.) The *greatness* and *publickness* of a Divine stroke, beyond what is *common to men*; especially, if so great, as in common repute to be above the power of man to inflict, (as I have before intimated) gives the first glimpse of light in this Case. Which puts us, (as it lawfully may, nay, more in duty ought where the concern is some way our own) upon enquiry into the *Nature* of it. For we are wonted to do so in Humane Societies. If a *stranger* come by a *Gallows* or a *Whipping-post*, and see a man *hanged*, and *drawn*, and *quartered* at the

one,

one, and another ſeverely *whipped* at the other; he will preſently be enquiring, wherefore ſuch perſons are handled with ſuch ſeverity in ſo notorious a manner? And when ſeverities, it may be far greater from God, befall any with as publick circumſtances, it is equally rational for the *ſpectators*, and much more the *ſufferers*, to enquire what he means by them; and even to ſuſpect the worſt, that they may be *Judicial Executions*, till he be informed otherwiſe. Yea, God himſelf intimates his approbation of mens inquiſitiveneſs, in ſuch caſes: when he tells the *Jews*, that he would inflict ſuch ſore plagues on them, as ſhould move all Nations to ask, *Wherefore hath the Lord done thus unto this Land? What meaneth the heat of this great Anger?*

Deut. 29. 24.

(2.) But this alone, is not a *ſufficient character* to warrant us to pronounce ſuch a ſtroke to be a *Divine Judgment*, how ſevere ſoever it be; except there appear as evident and notorious *a crime* in conjunction with it. For the judging by the *former mark* ſingly, miſled *Jobs* friends in his Caſe: and the men of *Melita* in the cenſure they paſſed upon St. *Paul*, when they ſaw the *Viper hanging on his hand*. And it may miſlead us in like caſes. For if we interpret all ſuch great and remarkable ſeverities, on whomſoever they fall, to be Divine Judgments, we ſhall be often endangered unjuſtly to *condemn the Generation of Gods beſt Children*. But where *both* theſe in the ſame perſons meet, with equal Evidence; we can hardly be miſtaken, (except all Mankind be ſuppoſed to be ſo too, who commonly argue in ſuch caſes from this character) in calling ſuch Providences *Judgments of God*: or, if we be miſtaken, it is (in a ſort) a ſafe errour; as that which (if we make a religious uſe of our apprehenſions about it) will miſlead us only into

Acts 28. 4.

Pſal. 73. 15.

into ſuch affections and actions as tend to Gods glory, and our own benefit and advantage.

(3.) And a far greater evidence is given in this Caſe many times, to make *Divine Judgments manifeſt*, by the fair and legible *Impreſſion* and *Image* of the very offence it ſelf, upon the puniſhment inflicted. The *drowning of* Pharaoh *and the* Egyptians in the *Red Sea*, was a puniſhment ſo like their ſin in *drowning all the male Children of the* Iſraelites *in the River*: the burning *Nadab* and *Abihu* with a *ſtrange fire from Heaven*, was a Divine ſtroke ſo aptly ſuted to their offence in offering Incenſe with *ſtrange fire to Heaven*: the inceſtuous defilement of *Davids Concubines* by *Abſalom*, had ſo expreſs a ſignature of the defilement of *Uriahs wife* by *David*: and (to mention no more Examples at preſent) the *cutting off the Thumbs and great Toes of* Adonibezek himſelf, was ſo ſignal a requital of the like cruelty ſhewed by him to 70 *Kings* before: that no man needs to doubt the lawfulneſs of calling them by the Name they have always born, that of remarkable Divine Judgments. And it can rationally be no matter of ſcruple to any one, to give Providences of the like ſtamp the ſame name ſtill.

Exod. 14.

Exod. 1. 20. Levit. 10. 1, 2.

2 Sam. 12. 11.

Judges 1. 7.

(4.) And it makes much to the ſtrengthning the Evidence in ſuch matters, when ſuch *remarkable Divine ſtrokes tread cloſe* upon the *heels of ſome notorious offence*, as oftentimes they do: yea, ſo cloſe, as to ſurpriſe the offender in the very Act. The ſtriking the *Sodomites blind* in the very attempt of a foul ſin not to be named; and the firing of the whole *City* the next morning with a ſtorm of flaming Brimſtone; the *cleaving of the Earth to* ſwallow *Korah* and his company, even whilſt they ſtood daringly in the face of God and the Congregation, to avouch a foul Rebellion againſt *Moſes*,

Gen. 19. 11.

Num. 16. 32.

and a ſacrilegious uſurpation of *Aarons Prieſthood*;
Num. 25. 8. the *running through of* Zimri *and* Cosbi, in the very act of bold and audacious uncleanneſs; the *ſlaying* of *Belſhazzar* the *very night* following his profane debauch, acted by the abuſe of *Gods Conſecrated Veſſels* to *drunkenneſs*,
Dan. 5. 30. at an Idols feaſt; the turning of his Grandfather *Nebuchadnezzar* a-grazing among oxen, when that vaunting brag was
Dan. 4. 31, 32, 33. ſcarce out of his mouth, *Is not this great* Babylon *that I have built for the houſe of the Kingdom, by the might of my power?* the ſmiting *Ananias* and
Acts 5. 5, 10. 12. *Saphira* dead, with a lye in their mouths to cover
22, 23. their ſacrilege; the *eating up Herod* by *worms*, ſo cloſely attending upon his owning the blaſphemous flattery of the people: and many more like Inſtances to theſe, none ever gave a *ſofter Title* to, than that of *Divine Judgments*. And wherefore the *drunkards* breaking his neck in his drunkenneſs, and the hectoring *challengers* being ſlain in a Duel, and the *perjured* perſons being ſmitten dumb or dead in his perjury, and the like penal events befalling other ſinners in the very act of other ſins of as hainous a nature; may not ſtill, by a parity of Reaſon, paſs for Providences of the ſame denomination, I cannot imagine.

(5.) When ſuch *penal Providences* are the evident and notorious conſequents of provoking and daring *Appeals*, *Applications*, or *Addreſſes to God* of any kind; or of *conteſts with him*: there is all the Reaſon in the world why we ſhould take them for *Divine Judgments*, extorted by an impious importunity, or provoking Inſolence.

1.) In caſe of *Appeals* to God, *implicit* or *explicit*. When the *bitter water*, under the Law, envenomed by the imprecation of the diſloyal wife againſt her ſelf, in caſe ſhe was guilty of the fact

ſhe

ſhe was ſuſpected of, *cauſed her belly to ſwell, and her thigh to rot*; the implicit *Appeal* to Gods De- Num. 5.
ciſion in this caſe, made the event evidently to be 22.
a Divine Judgment. When *Korah* and his Com- Num. 16.
plices dare put it to a Divine determination, *whe-* 5.
ther they had not as much right to offer Incenſe as Aaron *and his Sons:* The Event in this Caſe declared that God judged the cauſe in which he was thus appealed to againſt them? And when the wicked *Jews* by tumultuous out-cries call on *Pilate* to *crucifie Jeſus* for a *Malefactor*, and encourage him, when his Conſcience boggles at ſo foul an act of Injuſtice, with this fearful imprecation, (in the nature of ſuch an *Appeal*) that if he were not guilty, God would lay *his blood on them and their children*; and the Event of ſo many Ages hath declared the ſaid guilt not to be yet waſhed off from their whole Poſterity: None but an *hardened Jew* will ever doubt, whether there be a *Divine Judgment* in this caſe or no. Laſtly, When holy *Job* (againſt the unjuſt charges of his cenſorious friends, who among other crimes, taxed him with *breaking the arms of the fatherleſs: i. e.* That by his Job 22.
power he had ſo cruſhed them that they were diſa- 9.
bled to maintain their right againſt him) had appealed to God for his vindication, and imprecated againſt himſelf, that if he were guilty of this Crime, *his Arm might fall from his Shoulder-blade, and be broken* Job 31.
from the bone; *i. e.* That the fleſh might rot from the 21, 22.
bone, till his Arm fell from his Shoulder; if a little after, that *Arm had dropped off* according to his Execration, and ſome concurring evidence withal had appeared to prove him guilty of the fact which he ſo diſclaimed, (I ſay, if it had ſo faln out, which it did not, becauſe he was innocent) had not his friends been juſtified, if they had cryed out in the words of the Pſal-

miſt, *Behold! the Lord is known by the Judgment that he executeth!*

2.) In caſe of *Addreſs* or *Application* to him, in matters of another nature. As in *promiſſory Oaths*, (or which in ſubſtance is all one) *Imprecations* of Gods vengeance, upon *non-performance* of what men undertake to do. Which *Addreſſes* are either *ſerious* or *cuſtomary*. And in both ſorts, *Gods Judgments* may be manifeſted, as the circumſtances may be.

(1.) In *ſerious addreſſes* of this kind. As in the Caſe of the Children of *Iſrael*, when they were obliged to ſay *Amen* to the *fearful Curſes* annexed to the Law; they did therein implicitly addreſs themſelves to God, and pray, that all thoſe curſes, in caſe of diſobedience to that Law, might befall them; which Curſes are therefore called the *Curſes of the Covenant*, becauſe they covenanted with God upon that penalty to keep his Commandments there mentioned. And therefore, afterwards, when God had executed thoſe ſeverities upon them, which made all the Neighbour-Nations to enquire, [*Wherefore the Lord had dealt ſo with them.*] Men are directed by God to anſwer, *Becauſe they have forſaken the Covenant of the Lord, the anger of the Lord was kindled againſt this Land to bring upon it all the curſes written in this Book.* And he moreover tells them, that they need not fear offending by a *raſh cenſure*, where Gods Judgments with the Cauſes of them were ſo manifeſt. For *though ſecret things belong to God*; *i. e.* in dark caſes, we muſt not be too forward to paſs our ſentence upon Gods providential proceedings; yet *things revealed*, (as ſuch *Judgments* inflicted upon ſuch a *forfeiture* by Covenant betwixt God and a People are) *belong to us and our children*, to interpret and improve them. And the like may be the caſe

Deut. 29. from 25. to 26.

Deut. 29. 21.

Ver. 25. to 29.

caſe of *particular perſons*, when they vow and ſolemnly Covenant with God to leave ſuch vices, and amend their lives; and to bind themſelves the more firmly, imprecate ſuch evils upon themſelves, in caſe they fail in performance. Of which there is a notable Inſtance in one of our late Writers, of Sir *Jervaſe Ellowis*, (as he calls him) who at the place of Execution took notice to all the people preſent of *Gods juſt Judgment* that brought him to that *end*: for that he had ſolemnly (being given to *gaming*) upon ſome ſpecial occaſion, prayed to God, *That if he did ſo any more, he might be hang'd: and having broken promiſe with God, he had brought his own wiſh upon him.* *Wilſon Hiſt. of K. James.*

(2.) In *cuſtomary Addreſſes* of that nature; when men upon every ſlight occaſion imprecate in the form of a *cuſtomary wiſh*, (as a vain *Parentheſis* in diſcourſe, with ſome perſons too frequent) any evil upon themſelves, to back every ſlight purpoſe or trivial Promiſe that drops unadviſedly from their lips: Theſe men, though they uſe not Gods Name explicitly in ſuch forms of diſcourſe, (and yet too often even that is done, [*I wiſh to God*, &c.] is too frequent a Phraſe) yet they do imply it, and it hath the force of an application to God, to inflict ſuch an evil on them. Now, if when men fail, as too often they do, in thoſe unadviſed promiſes of theirs, and God brings the calamity they wiſhed upon them; I ſhould not ſcruple in ſuch a caſe to look on it as the execution of a Divine Judgment, to warn people, how they uſe any expreſſions wherein *Gods Name* is concerned, in a *ſlight* and *cuſtomary* manner. And I am perſwaded, if it were well obſerved, God doth to very many perſons of lewd Tongues, perform in earneſt, what they ſo often inconſiderately imprecate in this world: and doubt he doth ſo to many

more in another world, where their [*God-damn-me's*] and [*The-Devil-take-me's*] and the like familiar forms of cuſtomary diſcourſe, with prophane men, are (with the ſtinging atteſtations of their own Conſciences to Gods Juſtice therein) ſadly verified upon them to all eternity.

3.) In caſe of *Conteſts with God*, *Gods Judgments* are often *manifeſted* and made known to be what indeed they are. As,

(1.) When they light upon the *furious maintainers* of a *falſe Religion* againſt the *true*: eſpecially, if in a publick and notorious *competition*, God be (as it were) *challenged* to appear in the vindication of his Truth. Which was the caſe of *Baals Prieſts* in their notable conteſt with *Elijah*, where-
1 Kings 18. in God brought them to publique Execution, by a miraculous Confutation in the preſence of all Iſrael.

(2.) When ſuch *Divine ſeverities* befall the profeſſours and propugners of *Atheiſm and Irreligion*, in oppoſition to *all Religion*. If ſuch perſons *die not the common death of other men*, the common vote of Mankind pronounceth them to be execu-
Vid. Cic. de Nat. Deor. m. l. 1, & 2. Laert. in vit. Prot. Ariſtip. Epic. Bionis. Athen. l. 13. Ælian. l. 4. ted by a *Divine Judgment*. As appears, by the cenſures paſſed by Heathens themſelves upon the ſtrange ends of *Diagoras*, *Protagoras*, *Bion*, *Theodorus*, *Epicurus*, *Pherecides*, and others, who either were, or were generally reputed, *Atheiſts* among them: And by thoſe of the Holy Scriptures on *Pharaoh*: and of the Eccleſiaſtical Writers on *Caligula*, *Maximinus*, *Julian*, and many other Atheiſtical and prophane promoters of Irreligion.

(3.) When the like ſevere Providences befall ſuch, as though they profeſs the *true Religion*, yet becauſe they make uſe of that Profeſſion only as a *maſk* to cover thoſe deſigns againſt it, (which they dare not carry on with open face) God fore-

fore-dooms in the Scripture (as guilty of moſt pernicious oppoſition againſt it) to a notable and ſignal Ruine and Deſtruction. As in the caſe of the *great Antichriſt*; when God, having *revealed that wicked one fully*, ſhall finally deſtroy both him, and his Seat, where *ſitting in the Temple of God*, he acts the *Devil* in *Gods Name*, by *Satanical ſigns and lying wonders*: both the Church Militant and Triumphant are called on to acknowledge and *rejoyce* in the *juſt Judgments* of God executed on him and his Adherents. 2 Theſ. 2. 4. to 12. Apoc. 15. 2, 3, 4, 19. 1, 2.

(6. It is no ſlight Evidence to a *Divine Judgment*, when (as it often falls out) an *offenders Conſcience* under ſuch a remarkable ſtroke of Gods Hand, *owns* it as the juſt puniſhment of ſuch a particular notorious Crime: and *gives glory to God*, (with *Achan*) by confeſſing it before the world. When *Adonibezek*, convicted by his own Conſcience, cryes out, *as I have done, ſo hath God* requited me: and *Joſephs Brethren*, in the danger they were in to be executed for *Spies* in *Egypt*, charge themſelves with the guilt of their envy and cruelty againſt their Brother; and acknowledge, that *therefore that diſtreſs came upon them*: And when *Malefactors* at the place of *Execution*; and *debauched livers* in ſome notable Calamities, and eſpecially in the near proſpect of *Death* and *Eternity* under ſome ſignal ſtroke of Gods Hand, accuſe themſelves, and attribute thoſe ſeverities to their particular Crimes: What Reaſon hath any man to give their ſufferings a *milder name* than they give them themſelves? Jud. 1. 7. Gen. 42. 21.

And thus have I given you the beſt *Characters* I could, by which to diſcern *Divine Judgments* from *Providences* of a like ſeverity, befalling men on other accounts: my *fifth Head*.

VI. The *ſixth* follows: to wit, [*To give you directions in the making application of Divine Judgments*

to particular Cases, without offending against Justice or Charity.]

The Reason why such directions are needful, is very evident. For we are forbidden by our Saviour, *to judge* our Brethren, *lest we also be judged.* Mat. 7. 1. And in the noted Cases of those on whom the *Tower in* Siloe *fell*, and those *whose blood* Pilate *mingled with their Sacrifices*; our Lord seems to take the part of the *Sufferers* against their *Censures.* Luke 13. 1, 2, 3. And the miscarriage of *Jobs friends* in their dealings with him, is by God himself expresly condemned. Job 42. 7. Wherefore, it is meet this Case should be carefully stated, that we may (in the present Argument) be satisfied, how far we may lawfully go in applying Gods Judgments, so as to preserve our selves from such Errours. And in *Answer* to this Case, I shall (as I did on the *former* Head) *first* premise some *Grounds* to proceed on; and thence proceed to the *direct solution* of it according to them.

[1. The *Grounds* which I shall premise, are these.

1.] That it follows from what was said on the *former Head*, that in such Applications of Divine Judgments to particular Cases, we are to be very cautelous and circumspect.

2.] And yet it does not follow, that we are totally obliged to forbear them. Yea, rather, there are divers Arguments from Scripture, which give great countenance, and (in some Cases) great encouragement, to the making of them.

(1. As *first*, the *Text* it self, which asserts such *Judgments* to be means whereby *God is made known*; will necessarily infer, that in order to the making this use of them, we must be allowed the liberty of discreet and considerate *Application* of them.

For

For to ſuppoſe a notable *Judgment executed* with ſignal manifeſtation of a Divine Hand therein, and of purpoſe deſigned for men to take notice of it: and yet, not to allow them to obſerve it in thoſe circumſtances which render it moſt obſervable, (all which circumſtances are neceſſarily annexed to particular Caſes) implies a contradiction.

(2. The Scripture tells us of Holy Men who have made ſuch *particular Applications*, and have not been *blamed*, but rather *commended* for it: and their examples left on ſacred Record for the imitation of future Times. It is given as an honourable character in general of good and holy men, that becauſe they have *pleaſure* in that imployment, they *ſeek out the great works of the Lord*, of which theſe judicial Providences are a ſpecial part. And holy *David* propounds himſelf in particular, as an encouraging example to patient expectation of the Iſſue in that ſtumbling Caſe of Divine Providence, [*The notable proſperity of ſome notorious wicked men*] telling us, that *he* himſelf *had ſeen* ſome *ſuch in great power*, (probably *Saul* and his profane Courtiers and Favourites) *flouriſhing like a green Bay-tree*; whom yet he obſerved in the Iſſue notably extirpated, ſo that *they could not be found*. And that notable ſpeech of *Hezekiah* to the *Levites*, is recorded to his commendation, (as a conſiderable part of that which gave him juſt Title to that honourable character, that he *did that which was right in the ſight of the Lord, according to all that his father* David *had done*) wherein he obſerves particularly, (though with reflection upon his *father Ahaz*) that the Lord had lately *delivered* Judah *to trouble and aſtoniſhment, and hiſſing and that their fathers fell by the Sword, and their ſons, and daughters, and wives*, were yet in captivity,

Pſal. 111. 2.

Pſal. 37. 35, 36.

1 Chron. 29. 2, 6, 7, 8, 9.

vity, for *the neglect of Gods House*; which he thence quickens the *Priests* and *Levites* for the future to take more care of.

(3. *Good* men in general are *encouraged* with the *promised prospect* of *Divine Judgments* on some notorious wicked men. *When the wicked* (such whose prosperity was a tentation to good men to *fret* and be *envious* against them) *are cut off, thou* (says the Psalmist to the man whom he encourageth *to wait on the Lord and keep his way*) *shalt see it*, *i. e.* so as to take notice of it to thy great satisfaction and encouragement to depend on God for the future. And elsewhere, the *righteous* is told, that when the notorious oppressing Judges, against whom that Psalm is directed, shall *be taken away as with a whirlwind living, and in Gods wrath*, *i. e.* brought in the prime of their prosperity to a sudden and violent end; that he shall *rejoyce when he seeth the vengeance*: and *wash his feet in the blood of the wicked*, *i. e.* in a kind of holy Triumph for the manifestation of Divine Justice, shall even trample upon them when they lye in their blood, without fear of defilement, (to which in other cases the Jews by the Law for touching any thing of a dead Corps were liable) any more than if they had *washed* their *feet* in *water*.

Psal. 37. 34.

Psal. 58. 10.

(4. And *sinners* are *blamed*, for not drawing Arguments of *caution* and *reformation* from the particular Instances of Gods Judgments in their days. As *Belshazzar*, for that when he saw and knew how God had dealt with his proud *Grandfather Nebuchadnezzar*, he notwithstanding *lifted himself up against* the same *God*, before whom he ought on that consideration to *have been humbled*. And the remaining *Tribes of* Judah and *Benjamin* are severely taxed, for that *when they*

Dan. 5. 18, 19, 20, 21, 22.

saw

ſaw that God had rejected and ſent into Captivity the *Ten Tribes*, their brethren, for their Idolatry; yet *they* feared not, but went on confidently in the ſame provoking ſin themſelves And it is not to be underſtood how any perſons can be obliged to take *warning* from particular Examples, if they be not allowed to apply ſuch Providences of God to them, in thoſe particulars from whence that *caution* is to be gathered.

3.] Wherefore we muſt find out ſome *other Interpretation* of thoſe *Scriptures*, which ſeem totally to prohibit all applications of Divine Judgments to particular Caſes: and particularly of *thoſe before mentioned*. And that (as to them at leaſt) is a matter of no great difficulty. For the *firſt* of them forbids *one* Chriſtian indeed to *judge another*: but it is only a raſh and a harſh cenſuring Chriſtian brethren (as the Phariſees were wont to do) even for the ſmalleſt faults; and that when the cenſurers themſelves, it may be, (as they) indulge themſelves in greater, (ſuch as are like *beams* to the others *motes*, as appears, *v.* 2.) that is there forbidden. And the blame which in the *ſecond Text*, the relaters of the *fall of the Tower of* Siloe, and the mixing the *blood of the* Galileans *with their Sacrifices by* Pilate, did incur; was not barely for taking notice of theſe Events as Divine Judgments, but for judging the perſons (in a like *Phariſaical* pride) *greater ſinners than others*, and than themſelves in particular; having no other evidence to ground that cenſure, than that what they ſuffered was more ſevere than what uſually befell others; which indeed was none at all. And *Jobs* friends (the *third* Text) were cenſured by God for making the like uncharitable and unwarrantable Inference from his Providential ſeverities upon *Job*. So that

Mat. 7. 1.

Luke 13. 1, 2.

that all these Scriptures thus interpreted, (as indeed they must be) make nothing against the lawfulness of a modest, sober, prudent, and discreet application of Divine Judgments to particular cases; seeing in an application so qualified, we shall be secure from offending against *Justice* or *Charity*.

[2. And therefore I proceed, in the next place, to give you the Directions promised you to preserve you from so offending, in like applications of *Divine severities*.

(1. *First* then, *Privately* and in our *own bosoms*, we may with more *freedom* and *latitude* make such applications, than we may *discourse* them withal to *others*: if withal we take care to turn our inward sentiments only to those uses, which reflect Glory to God, and benefit to our selves; without gratifying any unlawful Passion, apt on such occasions to be stirred towards our suffering brethren, and neighbours. And yet,

(2. When *Gods Providence* it self makes any Case *notorious* by producing an offender, as it were, and chastising him upon a *publick Theater*, the case being clear and evident of it self in the eyes of all men; no man is then bound up from bearing his part in the *publick discourse*: but (as he hath a call either by office, or occasional charity to the souls of men to take notice of it) every one may, nay ought, to serve Gods design therein, by making use of it for others, as well as his own, *edification*. And it is related as a thing imitable in the primitive Christians, that they interpreted the sudden deaths of *Ananias* and *Saphira*, as remarkable Judgments of God, and not only were possessed with great fear themselves on that occasion, but also derived that fear to many others, by publishing

Acts 5. 11.

liſhing it, ſo that *they feared* likewiſe as many as *heard* of it.

(3. We are not ſo much in danger of *offending againſt Juſtice* or *Charity* in the application of Divine Judgments, when they befall *great Communities* and Societies of men, as when they light only on *particular Perſons*, or *ſmaller Parties*. For when Nations and other great Communities fall under great *Epidemical calamities*, wherein *every member* ſome way or other ſuffers, or at leaſt is endangered to ſuffer; there God himſelf expects his hand ſhould be publiquely acknowledged, and due means uſed by religious Addreſſes to him ſolemnly and generally made for the removing of them; and in them requires that *each Member* bear a part, and accuſe himſelf and be deeply humbled, as being a partaker in that guilt which procured them: So that what *every one* is obliged to own, is without injury or breach of charity imputable to them *all*. Whereas there are very few *private Caſes*, wherein the Perſons ſuffering can be convincingly brought by others under a like obligation, to own and acknowledge the particulars charged on them by their Cenſurers, as the Cauſes for which they ſo ſuffer: and ſo we are endangered to charge them at adventure, and therein to be unjuſt and uncharitable.

(4. We run leſs hazard of violating *Juſtice* and *Charity*, in applying ſuch *Divine ſtrokes*, as *Judgments* to *ſome* perſons, than to *others*. For whereas there are ſome *notoriouſly bad men*, who *publiſh their ſin as* Sodom, and proclaim themſelves *to have no fear of God before their eyes*, being *altogether become filthy* or *ſtinking* (as the *Margin* hath it) in the noſtrils of all ſerious and ſober perſons; ſo that no *Charity*, be it never ſo large, (except it be wilfully blind withal) can

Iſa. 3. 9.

Rom. 3. 18.

Pſal. 14. 3.

judge

judge better of them: when any remarkable hand of God finds these persons out, to seize them for publique Exemplary punishment, I cannot see, why we may not, without any hesitation in a case so plain, think and say, *This is a remarkable Judgment of God; and a fair warning to all men to avoid such courses.* And especially if such persons have arrived to that height of professed wickedness as to *glory in their shame* at that rate, as to set themselves down in the *seat of the scornful*, and scoff Religion and Vertue out of countenance, as a thing despicable and contemptible; and to own themselves in all companies, as the publique *Hectors* and Champions of prophaneness and impiety, and professed *persecuters* of all persons that dare appear on the side of God and goodness. For in such cases, as I told you before, the opinion of all the world justifies us, in making the severest reflections upon their sufferings.

Phil. 3. 19. Psal. 1. 1.

But when sufferers, though the hand of God lie heavy upon them, are either eminently *good* men, or such as in the judgment of rational charity we are bound to *think well of* for the main; though they have their allay of humane frailty, and are *Gold*, though mixed with *dross*; yea, or such, as there is hope they may become *better*, because there is nothing that declares them *desperately* and *incorrigibly bad*: We are towards all these sorts of men to proceed in censuring with far greater Caution, and the better they are, the more must be observed; according to the *following measures.*

1.) That we endeavour to be as *sparing* in *applying* these sorts of Divine Providences, to the cases of particular persons under the former characters as God is in *inflicting* them; and appear as loth and unwilling to do the *one*, as he to do

do the *other.* For it is very uncharitable for any man to be over-forward in crying out, upon every unuſual ſtroke upon another, *A Judgment, a Judgment*; becauſe thereby he cruelly vexeth his brothers ſores; a thing which is done by nothing more than by exaggerating his calamities with the repreſentation of Gods diſpleaſure teſtified in them. Beſides, that the *haſtineſs* of men in ſuch applications, looks too much like that diſpoſition which *Charity* diſclaims, of *rejoycing in iniquity*, *i. e.* in the opportunity of colourable laying a criminal matter to ones brothers charge, without ſtaying to examine what ground there is for it: as on the contrary, to *rejoyce in the Truth*, *i. e.* to be glad when by the diſcovery of the truth, our own and others ſuſpicions or miſapprehenſions concerning him are removed, and he vindicated, is a *charitable Temper*, as the Apoſtle deſcribes it. 1 Cor. 13. 6.

2.) That we do not firſt *fancy* a *Divine Judgment* in our own thoughts to have befaln ſuch a *Perſon* or *Party* as we do not affect; and then *ſearch out iniquities*, (in the Pſalmiſts Phraſe) or make a ſtrict Inquiſition, to find out criminal matters in him to apply it unto, for the juſtification of our own cenſure. For this is a prepoſterous inverting of the Rules of Juſtice, which is never wont to pronounce ſentence firſt at all adventure, and then examine the *Cauſe*, or rather, *whether there be any cauſe*: and a great breach of *Charity* alſo, as implying a malicious deſign againſt our brother, which we ſeek an opportunity to execute. Pſal. 64. 6.

This ſeems to be the fault of thoſe *Diſciples* themſelves, who enquired of Chriſt concerning the *man that was born blind*: for they firſt reſolve upon it, that this was a *Judgment of God* on him for

ſome

some sin; and then they came to our Saviour to
Joh. 9. 2. resolve them, *for whose sin it was, his own, or his Parents?* And it seems evident, by the whole carriage of their discourses, that *Jobs friends*, though they unanimously first conclude among themselves, that his sufferings were *Divine Judgments* upon him for some *foul crime*; yet they are at a loss what crime of that nature to find him guilty of, and therefore they tax him at all adventure, with all the horrid Crimes they can imagine, to draw a confession from him at least of some of them, for the justification of their own uncharitable censure.

3.) That we do not *hastily* call such severe Providences of God towards such particular Persons, *Judgments*, whom we can charge with nothing that is notoriously sinful, in the *general Judgment* of *all Mankind*, or at least, of *all Christians*. For it is a great piece of *uncharitableness*, as well as *injustice*, which is too ordinarily practised in such places where the common Christianity is crumbled into *Sects* and *Parties*; for dissenters of all sides to impute the sufferings befalling their *opposites*, to Divine displeasure against them for holding such opinions as differ from theirs, or practising in some particulars otherwise than they do. Now this ariseth ordinarily from a *partial fondness* which every one hath for his *own opinion* or *way*: which inclines him to think *God* hath as great a *kindness* for it as himself, and his Party have: and to conclude all his Providences to be accordingly engaged to serve under those banners of distinction, under which he hath listed himself: whence such persons find it easie (upon every unusual stroke of God upon any that are not every way agreeable to their humour) to conclude, that the very

point

point in difference betwixt them is judged by God and their oppoſites, confuted from Heaven by a *Demonſtration* of Divine diſpleaſure againſt them. And ſuch an unhappy Paralogiſm as this, we are told by our Hiſtorians, it was, which in the dark times of Popery gave the cauſe, in the opinion of an whole *Synod*, againſt the *married Clergy*, when the *ſide of the Room where the maintainers of it ſat fell down, killing ſome, and hurting others.* For thereupon they that were for *Prieſts ſingle life*, cryed down the *Cauſe* of the *faln Party* with them, as witneſſed againſt by God himſelf; and by that ſorry Argument and Noiſe prevailed. Now againſt this great miſtake (by the way) we ſhall never be ſufficiently armed except we govern our Apprehenſions by theſe *Two Principles.*

(1.) That God never appointed the *dark Rule of Providence* (to us it is no other) to judge *Cauſes* by, whether right or wrong, good or bad. Oftentimes, for *ſecret ends* of his own, he blaſts a good, and proſpers a bad cauſe, as the *bad Cauſe* of the *Benjamites*, in two ſet Battels, againſt the *good Cauſe* of the Eleven *Tribes*: and the horrid and blaſphemous Impoſture of the *Mahometans* hath now for many Ages, by the permiſſion of Providence, proſpered wonderfully againſt the greateſt part of the *Chriſtian* world. Judg. 20. 21, 25.

(2.) That *Gods great and ſignal Judgments*, of which we are diſcourſing, are now adays *rarely inflicted*, but for ſuch Crimes as are generally condemned in the *Judgment* of *all Mankind*, or at leaſt, *the generality of Chriſtians*, according as he deſigns the notice of them to be ſpread in a greater or narrower compaſs. And the Reaſon is evident, to wit, becauſe it cannot otherwiſe be rationally expected, the Juſtice of them ſhould

be clearly and convincingly owned, and ſo the good they are intended for muſt needs be hazarded to ſo many as are diſſatisfied in the merit of the Cauſe that is taken to procure them. But when a Divine ſeverity juſtly makes an example of any perſon in the general opinion notoriouſly criminous; they are *all inexcuſable, who thenceforward do the ſame things they condemned in another*, (as the Apoſtle ſaith) and confeſs Gods Judgment to have righteouſly befaln him for.

Rom. 2. 1.

Mat. 10. 27. 4.) That we *publiſh* not *on the houſe tops* (in our Saviours phraſe on another occaſion) that which is, it may be, *whiſpered in our ears* only; and few, poſſibly no other perſons know of. For it may ſo fall out, that our intimate *acquaintance* with ſome men, and their circumſtances, may give us knowledge of their *particular vices*, ſecret as to all the reſt of the world; and of Gods *ſecret ſtrokes* befalling them in their perſons or private concerns, which we in our own thoughts may rationally conclude to be Divine Judgments inflicted for them. Now in ſuch Caſes, though we may with great charity declare our apprehenſions hereof to the *parties concerned* themſelves, and admoniſh, and exhort them on that occaſion; yet it were great uncharitableneſs to publiſh to others either the *one* or the *other*.

For, when God intends (as appears by his way of proceeding therein) only a *private correction*; it muſt proceed from a *defect* of *charity* in us, if we by divulging it, turn it into a *publique Execution*, to the expoſing our Brother to an open ſhame. And the very juſtice of every *petty School* may convince us of the evil of ſo doing; wherein the corrections given within thoſe walls are forbidden to be divulged, under a like penalty

to

to that which the disgraced School-fellow suffered.

5.) That we *apply* not the severe-strokes of God upon our neighbour to the satisfaction of our *private spleen* and *revengeful Humour*: which is too ordinary when we think such as lie under them have wronged us, (or it may be they really have so) and we conclude, their sufferings are *Divine Judgments* befalling them on our Quarrel. This was the uncharitable Censure of *Shimei* against *David*, when he tells him that *God had avenged on him the blood of the House of* Saul, by the *Rebellion* of *Absalom*. For it is plain by the Text, that *Shimei* was of the very *family of* Saul: and it may be looked upon himself, as in some probable vicinity to the *Crown*, if the succession of it had continued in *that family*. At least 'tis probable, that by the translating it from thence, he found his hopes (as to those preferments and other advantages which usually are attained at Court by those of the Royal Blood) blasted and defeated. It is true indeed that Gods Justice doth sometimes appear in the remarkable vindication of eminently good mens, and his useful Instruments Causes: but for every ordinary person upon every petty trifling injury, to expect that he should do the like for him, or suppose he doth it, is too great a Presumption. 2 Sam. 16. 5, 6, 7, 8.

6.) That we judge not our Brethrens *estate towards God*, and much less their *future estate* from the most evident Judgments temporally befalling them.

(1.) Not their *present estate towards God*. For a sore Judgment may befall a man greatly in Gods favour, for a foul Crime; as in the case of the *Death of* Davids *child*, inflicted, even after his Repentance, for those hainous sins of *Adultery*

and *Murder*; becauſe he had by them *cauſed the Enemies of God to blaſpheme*; doth evidently appear.

2 Sam. 12. 14.

(2.) And much leſs muſt we thence judge their *future eſtate* in another world. For there is no ſufficient cauſe to judge even *Nadab* and *Abihu*, the inquiſitive *Bethſhemites*, *Uzzah*, and others, damned; though God ſmote them dead in unwarrantable actions. Yea, even *Moſes* and *Aaron* themſelves died by a Divine Sentence, in the Wilderneſs for their *ſin at* Meribah: and yet one of them (*Moſes*) we have ſufficient evidence is in glory: and have no reaſon to doubt the caſe of the *other*. Yea, men may be *judged of the Lord*, (in the *Apoſtles* ſuppoſition) when chaſtened with *ſickneſs* and *death* extraordinary, *that they may not be condemned with the world*: and an offender *delivered even to Satan*, may ſuffer *to the deſtruction of the fleſh*, *that his ſpirit may be ſaved in the day of the Lord*, *i. e.* in the private Judgment which he undergoes from the Lord at his death.

Lev. 10. 3. 1 Sam. 6. 19. 2 Sam. 6. 7. Mat. 17. 3. 1 Cor. 11. 30, 31, 32. 1 Cor. 5. 5.

7.) That we aſſign not *particular ſins* as the ſpecial Cauſes of a Divine Judgment too *peremptorily*; except where the circumſtances notoriouſly evince it by the *Rules before given*, or ſome of them at leaſt. For if we be therein miſtaken in our Judgment; yea, if there be no moral certainty that we are not miſtaken, (ſuch as may rationally convince the perſons concerned and others thereof) the *end* which we are ſuppoſed to deſign by ſuch application, (to wit, to render the *particular ſin* to which we attribute the procuring that Judgment more *formidable*) is loſt upon thoſe whom we particularly intend to benefit by it, and others too: and we our ſelves are liable to be cenſured, for putting an

un-

uncharitable brand upon our brother without a cauſe.

8.) That we *vaunt* not, or *magnifie our ſelves* againſt our ſuffering Brother, by *comparing* our ſelves with him, as if we were therefore the *better men*, becauſe we *fare better* at Gods Hands he. This is one property of *Charity*, (among the many excellent characters given it by the Apoſtle) that it *vaunts not it ſelf*, (*i. e.* with the diminution of a mans brethren, for elſe it were rather a deſcription of Humility than Charity) nor is, upon ſuch an account, *puffed up*. And the moſt uncharitable account upon which any man can *vaunt* to the leſſening of his brother; is, when it is done meerly upon the difference that Gods only pleaſure makes betwixt the one and the other. This (among many others) was one great piece of uncharitableneſs in *Jobs friends*, that having in his ſad ſufferings taxed him with being of the number of thoſe whom God had ſignally branded with remarkable Judgments, and a partner in guilt with thoſe of the *old world whoſe foundation was overflown with a flood*, though he were differenced in his puniſhment, being a ſufferer by the contrary Element of *fire*; they in the mean while boaſt, that *their ſubſtance was not cut down*, as being men more *acquainted with* God, more *humble*, more *innocent*; as they imply, when they adviſe *Job* upon their experience to become ſo too.

1 Cor. 13. 4.

Job 22. 15, 16, 20, 21, 29, 30.

9.) That we make no mans *religious living* formerly, or eminent *profeſſion* of it, (no not though we have ſome cauſe to think him declined from it now) by objecting it to him under ſuffering, a *part* of his *calamity*: nor occaſion him whilſt he ſuffers *under Gods hand* to ſuffer for *his ſake* too: A thing too uſual, when *bad* men apply the

Judgments of God (or those which they interpret to be such) to *good* men, or those who have had a reputation to be such, beyond their neighbours. For this is to give them (as the Persecutors did to our Saviour) *gall and vinegar to drink*, when they have already *bitterness* enough upon their spirits from the *Cup* of their *Cross*, that God appoints them to *drink off*. This was to *David*, as he tells us, *like a Sword in his* bones, when profane men said to him in his affliction, *Where*
Psal. 42. 10. *is now thy God?* and when they cast in his Teeth, (as their successors did afterwards in our Saviours) his former *trusting in God*, as if it had either been
Psal. 22. 1, 8, 9. Hypocritical, or (if real) misplaced on one that had thus forsaken him. Now to deal thus with our neighbour, is at all times greatly uncharitable. For it either argues an hard *censure* of him that he is an *hypocrite*; or a greater and fouler *affront*, if we do not so esteem him; for then we *turn* (as the same Psalmist elsewhere taxeth men of the same uncharitable temper) *his*
Psal. 4. 2. *glory into shame*, and endeavour to make that a matter of disgrace to him which is really most commendable.

10.) In a word: That we do not *rejoyce*, *insult*, or *triumph* over any man under Gods hand, upon any account; much less *revile*, and *reproach* him; but really *pitty*, *bewail*, and *condole* with him rather; and (as we have opportunity) *instruct*, *admonish*, *comfort*, and *pray* for him. For to do the *former*, is the constant guise of those that (in the character of Gods Holy Spirit in the Scripture) are marked for *wicked* men. The
Obad. 12. Heathen *Edomites* were such; and they *rejoyced in the day of* Judah's *distress*. Davids *Enemies*, (being so to him on Gods account) were such; *and*
Psal. 35. 13. *in his adversity they rejoyced.* Our *Saviours Persecu-*

tors

tors were ſuch; and as *they judged him ſmitten of God*, they *ſhaked their heads* at him upon the Croſs, and reviled him with moſt unſavoury and reproachful ſpeeches. Iſa. 53. 4. See Mat. 27. 40, 41, 42, 43, 44. Mark 15. 29, &c.

And although there be ſeveral Paſſages in Scripture which ſeem to propound Gods Judgments as a *glad ſpectacle* to good men, and a matter of *rejoycing*, when they befall thoſe that are notoriouſly *wicked*: As when it is propheſied, *That the righteous ſhall rejoyce when he ſeeth the vengeance*, &c. And when God calls on all the Saints even in glory, (the *holy Prophets and Apoſtles* eſpecially) to *rejoyce* and triumph over *Antichriſtian Babylon*. Pſal. 58. 10. Apoc. 18. 2.

Yet it is to be obſerved, that theſe and the like Texts relate only to ſuch as were *Gods publique and notorious enemies*: and the joy and triumph required or allowed, in their deſtruction, is only upon account of the *ſucceſs of his cauſe* againſt them, and the vindication of his Glory and Intereſts. As appears remarkably in the *Pſalm* quoted, wherein he tells us, how the obſervers ſhould expreſs their joy, to wit, by taking notice, that *verily there is a reward for the righteous*, and that *verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth*. Pſal. 58. 11.

But the *latter* diſpoſitions and deportments are recommended to us by the Examples of the *beſt men*, and moſt *eminent* of *Saints*. When *Jobs friends* had dealt ſo uncharitably with him, he tells them what a different uſage they ſhould have found from him, *if their ſouls had been in his ſouls ſtead*; and aſſures them, that though he could in ſuch a caſe have *ſpoken as they did to him* now, and *heaped up words againſt them*, and *ſhaken his head* at their calamity, as they uſed him: yet he would have *ſtrengthned them with his mouth*, and

Job 16. 4, 5. *the moving of his lips should have asswaged their grief.* And when *Davids* very *bitter enemies*, that insulted over his calamity, *were sick*, he *cloathed himself with sackcloth*; *and his prayers*, though ungratefully received by them, and thrown back in scorn *into his bosom*, whence they proceeded, were heartily and sincerely from that *bosom* poured out to God for them. And our *Saviour*, the most perfect of men, to the many sufferers under Gods hand whom he relieved, was generally so compassionate; that he *took on him*, by a merciful Sympathy, *all the Infirmities* that he cured, and *bare all* his Patients *sicknesses*. Yea, he could not forbear *weeping* over the very prospect of those Tragedies he foretold himself against *Jerusalem*, though the *Shambles of his Prophets*, and his own *Slaughter-house*. And God expects, (as well as the sufferers themselves) *that to him that is afflicted pity should be shewn*; especially, *if the hand of the Lord hath touched him*: and dislikes that men (in their brethrens calamities) *should persecute like him, i. e.* take the same liberty of harsh and severe usage towards them, as God does, as if they could do it with like right and justice as he. In a word, it is his express command, that to shew our selves to *be of the same mind one towards another*, we not only *rejoyce with them that rejoyce*, but *weep also with those that weep*. And thus I discharge this *sixth* Head also.

Psal. 35. 13.

Mat. 8. 17.

Luke 19. 41.

Job 6. 14. 19. 21, 22.

Rom. 12. 15, 16.

VII. Come we now to the *seventh* and last, to *draw such Inferences* from this whole discourse as may be of use and advantage to us.

[1. And *first*, I infer the great Reason that there is for a *general Judgment* in another world. For, *seeing God is known by the Judgment that he executeth*; and all that which he executeth here, extends but to a few offenders; and it may be, the notice

notice taken of thoſe *Executions* that are made, reacheth but a *ſmall part* of Mankind: it ſtands with the higheſt Reaſon, that there ſhould be a Time wherein all the world may ſee (even thoſe that *while his hand was lifted up* on earth *would not ſee*) that *juſt and true are his Judgments*. Beſides, by the rareneſs of the *Judgments he executeth* here, inſtead of *being known* as he ought, he is by many apt to be *miſunderſtood*; whilſt they are generally ſtumbled at his letting ſo many notorious offenders eſcape for one that he puniſheth: and thoſe that eſcape here, many times are the greateſt and moſt proſperous of men, that even dare his juſtice, by *ſetting their mouths againſt the Heavens* themſelves. Wherefore, that he may make it known, that he ſpareth not ſo many *high and mighty offenders*, either through impotency, or partiality; it is eaſie to infer, that there muſt be ſuch a day, wherein *all men, whether they be ſmall or great, ſhall ſtand before him; and be judged according to their works*.

Iſa. 26. 11.

Pſal. 73. 9.

Apoc. 20. 12.

[2. I infer, that thoſe men *do God great diſſervice*, who either careleſly *overlook*, or deſignedly endeavour to *ſuppreſs* and keep from the notice of the world, theſe *remarkable Divine Judgments*: or (when by reaſon of their own publique circumſtances they cannot but be taken notice of by others) attempt to ſlur, and ſtifle as much as they can, the evidence of thoſe particularities which ſo much conduce to the preſerving and propagating the *knowledge of God* in the world. Thoſe of the *former* ſort are injurious in an high degree to God; who, when he expoſeth his glorious Attributes to view as on a *Theater*, will not vouchſafe to be *ſpectators* of them. But thoſe of the *latter* rank are prodigiouſly wicked. And yet too many even of theſe are to be found in all ages of the

the world, who ſtudy to darken Gods glory in ſuch remarkable Judgments, and to lead the apprehenſions that people naturally are apt to have of them, as far from God and Providence as they can find any colour to do. Thus the *Egyptian Magicians* (encouraged by a prophane Atheiſtical King, as well as prompted thereto, by their own malice) emulated the miracles that *Moſes* did, and by frequent attempts to do the like; endeavoured to perſuade the People, that there was nothing in them beyond the power of created beings to effect; till God at laſt in the *plague of the Lice*, drew from them an unwilling confeſſion, that neither they nor their maſter the Devil could imitate it, and that therefore it was the *finger of God*. And it ſeems to me, that the *Prieſts and Diviners* of the *Philiſtines*, were willing (when they were called into conſultation what to do with the *Ark of God*) to have carried on as bad a deſign, and to have perſuaded both themſelves and the people that it was a diſputable caſe, *whether* the *God of Iſrael* had inflicted thoſe Judgments upon them, which they had ſuffered; or whether it were a meer *chance that had befaln them*. And therefore, though they ſpeak ſome good words concerning the God of Iſrael, and give their advice, that if they returned the *Ark*, they ſhould make him ſome *Preſents* too, (it may be forced thereunto, as *Caiaphas* propheſied, by a Divine impulſe) yet they contrive to put the determination of that great Queſtion upon the iſſue of ſuch an *odd Experiment*, as without a miraculous influence of the Lord of all the Creatures upon thoſe that they imployed, would in all rational probability have determined it againſt God. For it was ten thouſand to one odds, but that the *Kine* (being *milch Kine*, and their *Calves newly*

Exod. 8. 19.

1 Sam. 6. 9.

taken

taken from their *ſides*, and *ſhut up* in their ſight, juſt as they were put into the Cart, that was by their advice to carry the Ark) being let looſe without a driver, had turned, as nature would prompt them, the ſame way their young ones had gone, rather than towards the *Land of* Iſrael. And a foul ſcandal it is to the *Chriſtian Name*, that too many of thoſe who bear it, do herein act, as if they joyned in deſign with the fore-mentioned *Heathens*. For, beſides the *downright Atheiſts*, (too many of whom paſs muſter now adays under Chriſts colours) whom I have before confuted; the *ſottiſh* and *prophane generation* of men are deſirous to look beſide God in all ſuch ſtrokes; leſt by confeſſing his hand in them, they ſhould be obliged to be more Religious, than ſutes the Intereſt of their Luſts. Whence, in the calamities which at any time befall themſelves or others, thoſe of them who pretend to but the leaſt ſmattering in *Philoſophy*, ſeek for cauſes to aſſign them to, either in the *general order* of *Nature*, moved when once ſet a going, without any ſpecial hand of God governing the motion of it ſelf; or in the *Influence* of *ſuperiour Bodies* upon the *inferiour*, by the Conjunctions and Oppoſitions, or other Aſpects of *Planets*, in imaginary Houſes, which the inventions of jugling Aſtrologers have built for them in the Heavens to conſult and quarrel in, about the government of the lower world; or to the *diſtempers* at ſome *ſeaſons* naturally corrupting the *Elements*, and by them the bodies, yea and the very minds of men. Others of a lower rank in their Intellectuals, through an ignorant malice ſuſpect the *evil Tongues* of ſome perſons who have ſome way or other (and often undeſervedly) gotten an *evil Name* among their Neighbours; or it may be, accuſe the Devil himſelf

ſelf for *paying them ſome ill turns he owed them*, though they were never known to have carried themſelves ſo towards him as to deſerve any ſuch uſage from him. In all which, and the like conjectures, it is the main buſineſs of the champions of Ignorance and Prophaneneſs, to *caſt a miſt* before their own eyes and other mens, to obſcure the *Providence* of *God* in thoſe *Judgments which he executeth*, leſt he ſhould be *known* by them. Which certainly is a crime of the greateſt magnitude: for it argues an *envy* at the *glory* which Gods wonderful Providences are wont to procure him in the world: than which there can hardly any attempt be conceived more *Satanical*.

[3. We may hence infer, How great Reaſon there is, that ſuch *Judicial Providences* ſhould be exactly taken *notice* of, and with all the notable circumſtances which moſt manifeſt God, *recorded*, and tranſmitted to Poſterity. The learned and judicious *Lord Verulam* takes notice of it as a defect in the hiſtorical part of Learning, that there is not extant an impartial and well-atteſted *Hiſtoria Nemeſeos*, (as he calls it) an account of the moſt remarkable Judgments of God on notorious offenders; and complains of it. And it were to be wiſhed, that God would put it into the heart of ſome *ſupreme Magiſtrates* to promote ſo godly a Deſign by their Authority, that the *great Judgments* of the *King of Kings* and *Lord of Lords* might be preſerved in publique avowed *Records*, as their *own Judgments* are. For certainly it would be a great check to the *Atheiſm* that ſo reigns in the world at this day, to have ſuch publique teſtimonics preſerved againſt them to ſtop their prophane mouths withal, when they take liberty to cry down God and Providence. And ſuch

De aug. ſ. ent. l. 2.

a work cannot be done effectually to ſuch a purpoſe, but with their encouragement and aſſiſtance, who are able to oblige the Relators of ſuch ſignal Providential ſtrokes, by the ſacred tye of an Oath, to *ſpeak the Truth, all the Truth, and nothing but the Truth*, in Gods cauſe, as well as mens: and ſeverely to puniſh thoſe perſons, who ſhall appear upon due examination *to lye for God, or againſt him.* But ſeeing ſuch a deſign is rather to be wiſhed, than hoped to be carried on, in ſuch an Age as this; I forbear to inſiſt longer on this Point; and in the *fourth* place infer,

[4. That thoſe *private Perſons*, in the defect of more publique endeavours in this kind, do God *good ſervice*, and much oblige Poſterity; who take what honeſt pains they can, in ſo profitable a diſcovery, by enquiring into, and informing themſelves and others from good Evidence, of ſuch Inſtances of Gods juſt Providence, as their Ages and the places they live in afford. For however ſome Atheiſtical ſpirits are, according to their wont, apt to ſlight and deſpiſe them: yet, abundance of ſerious and conſidering Perſons, do, and 'tis to be ſuppoſed, will, in after-Ages, make great advantages by them.

[5. And yet this muſt be attempted with great *care* and *caution*, as a thing which we cannot lay out too much circumſpect diligence and induſtry. Which alſo follows from my *Text* and Doctrine. For thoſe *Judgments* by which the *Lord is known*, muſt be firſt *known* to be, and to be his *Judgments*; that is, it muſt be known that ſuch things, as to matter of *Fact*, are certain; and that they are accompanied with ſuch *circumſtances* as carry in them a *moral certainty* alſo,

(as

(as I before told you) that they are inflicted by God upon such an account: because if there be a rational doubt of the one, or the other, there must be an equal uncertainty in the conclusions drawn from such uncertain Premises.

Wherefore, it is certainly a foul and hainous crime, and a thing highly injurious both to God and man, for any Person or Persons, either out of a *misguided zeal* for God, or out of a particular fond *affection* to any *Party* in Religion, and much more, upon the account of any more unjustifiable *Passion*; to become a *forger* of Divine Judgments: or a busie reporter and spreader of such Forgeries. For this is to Job 13.7. *speak wickedly for God*, and *talk deceitfully for him*; which *Job* chargeth with great abhorrency upon his friends; as judging it a most unbecoming thing to endeavour to prop up the Cause of the *God of Truth* with *falshoods*. Nor indeed is it less *mischievous*, than it is *unsutable*, to the interest it pretends to defend. For though *one* or *two* such *pious frauds* may prove at the first, (in some juncture of Time wherein simple and well-meaning devotion prevails over the inquisitive humour of Mankind) to be some way serviceable to the Design they were coined for: yet in process of Time, as the state of Religion alters, and men (having it, may be discovered the fallacy) grow more nice of belief in such matters; the case is quite different. For then strikes in (ordinarily) the subtil *Atheist* or *misbeliever*, and aggravates the flaws he finds in such stories, as are really obnoxious, to the blemishing the Reputation of the most undoubted Records of Christianity it self. And it can hardly be imagined what a foul

foul imputation upon that holy Religion of our bleſſed Saviour amongſt Atheiſts and other Infidels, thoſe Cart-loads of *Monkiſh ſtories* in the *Romiſh Church* have occaſioned; wherein the *Miracles* of their *fictitious Saints*, and the *Judgments* of God upon their *pretended Adverſaries*, are equally numerous; and yet both ſo groſly contrived, that the unskilfulneſs of the bungling Inventers ſaves the confuters of them the pains of any ſtudied Arguments to diſprove them. And yet with ſuch a fortiſh credulity are the generality of that Religion poſſeſſed, that there is hardly *any one* who was eminently *inſtrumental* in the *Reformation*, but they can tell you of ſome *miraculous Judgment* of God that brought him to his *End*; which they believe with equal faith to what they have for the Goſpel it ſelf: even that of *Luthers body being carried away out of his Coffin by the Devil*, which he himſelf lived to diſprove by his own Pen.

And it were well if it could be ſaid of them only, that they prop up a cauſe with *lying wonders* (as is propheſied of them) that *needs* it: and that the indiſcreet zeal of others, who would be thought to have *better Conſciences*, as they have (wherein they differ from them) a *better Cauſe*, did not make uſe of their Example too much, and treat their Brethren of different Judgments in the petty diſputes that divide them into Parties, in the ſame uncharitable manner. At leaſt it were to be deſired, if ſuch hot ſpirits will needs continue (with *Solomons Mad-man*) *to caſt Fire-brands* one at another; that they would not (with the Poets *Prometheus*) *ſteal fire from Heaven* to kindle them withall, by forging miraculous Providences to blaſt the Reputation of thoſe Cauſes they are prejudiced againſt, in the Perſons of thoſe that defend them.

2 Theſ. 2. 9.

Prov. 26. 18.

[6. Laſtly,

[6. Laſtly, we may learn hence, on all hands, to make a *more beneficial uſe* of Gods Judicial Providences: to wit, that of the *Text*, to endeavour to advance in the *knowledge of God* by them. Which Duty (according to the uſual extent of that Phraſe in Scripture) includes many particulars.

(1. As *firſt*, If any of us be ſufferers under any ſuch *ſtrokes*, as our own Conſciences ſuggeſt to us are *Divine Judgments:* we are betwixt God and our own ſouls to endeavonr to take up the *Controverſie* which he ſeems to have with us betimes: and in order thereunto to acknowledge and bewail thoſe known ſins which we are convinced of; and in a more ſpecial manner, thoſe which our own hearts ſeize on in freſh purſuit as the *particular* cauſes of that diſpleaſure from God, under which we lie: to humble our ſelves under his mighty Hand, and remove by ſerious reformation and amendment of life, *out of his ſight*, whatever is offenſive to thoſe *pure eyes which cannot behold evil, or look on iniquity.*

Hab. 1. 13.

And if it be not clear to us what *particular quarrel* God hath with us; or that he hath an *eſpecial cauſe* given him beyond the ordinary frailties of humanity; ſo that (as to any known great crime) we are as clear as *Job* himſelf; yet we are (as he is well adviſed, and alſo of himſelf reſolves before that advice) to *ſay to God, ſhew me wherefore thou contendeſt with me: and that which I ſee not, teach thou me: and if I have done iniquity, I will do ſo no more.*

Job 10. 2. 34. 31, 32.

This is to be done betwixt God and our own Conſciences, if none but God and they be acquainted with our circumſtances.

But if our *Caſes* and our *Crimes* too be already by Gods Providence expoſed to the *publique notice*, it is our duty in this Caſe to go farther; and to evidence our true Repentance to the world, by a true,

true, free, and ingenious acknowledgement, *justifying God, and giving glory to him*, as *David* and *Achan* did; and warning others not to offend him in like manner, by our Example. Pſ. 51. 4. Joſh. 7. 19.

And in all theſe caſes, if the *preſent Judgment* be upon ſuch courſes taken, removed; and *Gods Hand turned away* from us: we are our ſelves to take heed we *ſin thus no more, leſt a worſe thing come unto us*: and not provoke him, (by a feigned humiliation whilſt we are under his correcting hand, deſtitute of real amendment) to do as he threatens, *i. e. puniſh us ſeven times more*, and augment his ſeverities, till our *wound become incurable, and paſt remedy*. John 5. 14. Lev. 26. Jer. 15. 18. 2 Chron. 26. 16.

(2. If we be (as in *Epidemical Judgments*) ſufferers in common with others; our duty is, (inſtead of ſhifting off the blame upon others) each man in particular to own his own ſhare in the common guilt, (as *knowing the plague of his own heart*) and by true Repentance and amendment to leſſen the publique Load which he hath contributed to greaten; and call on others, as he hath opportunity, to do the like: and laſtly, when he hath rendred himſelf fit for that charitable office to the publique, by having recovered his own Innocence, to intercede earneſtly and affectionately, (uſing his renewed Intereſt with a reconciled God) for the ſociety to which he doth belong. 1 Kings 8. 38.

(3. If we be bare *hearers* or *beholders* of Gods great ſeverities upon others, and *our ſelves free*; we are then,

(1.) *Wiſely to conſider his doings*: ſo as to obſerve carefully what of God more than ordinary appears in them: that we may give him the glory of thoſe perfections, which he hath thereby rendred moſt conſpicuous, for which thoſe that *have pleaſure in his works* ſpecially ſtudy them. Pſ. 64. 9.

(2.) And particularly, to endeavour to reduce *Gods Providences* of this kind (as well as all others) to the Rule of his *written word*; and obſerve the correſpondency they bear each to other. For this will ſerve us to very great purpoſes, in order to a firm faith in him, and fear of him, when we can ſay, (with *Moſes* in the caſe of *Nadab* and *Abihu*) *This is that which the Lord hath ſaid.*

Lev. 10. 3.

(3.) To *lay them up in memory* as a choice treaſure, to be made uſe of when occaſion ſerves. For God expects his great works ſhould make deep Impreſſions in the minds of men. And therefore ſome Interpreters read that clauſe of *Pſal.* 111. 4. which we render, *He hath made his wonderful works to be remembred*, [*Memoriæ conſecravit*] he hath devoted or conſecrated them to remembrance. Wherein they imply, that it carries in it a kind of *ſacrilege*, to let them ſlip through our memories as common and inconſiderable things. And he takes notice of it himſelf as a great crime in the *Iſraelites*, *That they remembred not his hand, how he wrought his ſigns in* Egypt, *and his wonders in the field of* Zoan.

Pſal. 111. 4. Vers. Tig.

Pſal. 78. 42, 43.

(4.) And to *improve* that *remembrance*, as occaſion is offered, by applying it to our ſelves and others, according to the *ſuitableneſs* that thoſe Providences bear to the *caſes to which they are applicable.* So when the *Iſraelites* were apt to be afraid of the mighty and numerous Enemies they were to encounter, at their entrance into *Canaan*; God ſutably recalls to their memories, *what he did to* Pharaoh *and all* Egypt. And when our *Saviour* would fortifie his Diſciples againſt the Tentations to compliance with the obſtinate and unbelieving *Jews*, in holding out the *ſiege of* Jeruſalem, out of affection to their concerns there; having before told them of *that great day of the Revelation of the Son of Man* in his Judgments on that City, and that there wanted

Deut. 7. 16, 17.

Luke 17.

wanted nothing to compleat its deſtruction in proportion to *Sodom*, but only the removing the Chriſtians thence, (as they went afterwards to *Pella* out of the City) in conformity to *Lots going out of* Sodom: he bids them to *remember* Lots *wife*, whoſe tenderneſs of her concerns in *Sodom*, made her look back, and therefore by Gods juſt Judgment, in the very place, ſhe was turned into a *Statue of Salt*. And the *Pſalmiſt comforted himſelf* againſt Gods preſent Enemies, and their outragious inſolences; by *remembring Gods Judgments of old*. 29, 30, 31, 32. Pſal. 119. 52.

(5.) And to be ſenſible of the ſpecial *Mercy* and *Goodneſs* of God to us, whom, it may be he hath as *ſignally delivered* when we were in equal guilt and danger with others, who no leſs *ſignally periſhed*: yea, poſſibly, when our own Conſciences told us, that we our ſelves better deſerved to have been made Examples of Divine ſeverity, than they that were ſo.

Thus the returning *Jews* acknowledge with gratitude the Mercy of God to them, that in the common deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*, *he had left them a remnant to eſcape*; and to *give them a nail in his holy place*, *i. e.* a little, though but a weak faſtning there. And ſo ought all thoſe whom Gods Judgments have *left*, in publique calamities eſpecially, *like a few gleaning grapes after the Vintage*, as *Iſaiah* expreſſeth the ſaid *Remnant* of *returning Jews*. Ezra 9. 8. Iſa. 27. 6.

(6.) To poſſeſs our hearts with a *reverend* and *awful fear* of that God, who is *terrible in his doings toward the children of Men*. This uſe *David* made of Gods ſtroke upon *Uzzah*; he was *afraid of the Lord that day*. And the whole Chriſtian Church, yea, the generality of men that heard of the unuſual deaths of *Ananias* and his *wife*, (as I before obſerved) were ſurpriſed with *a great fear*. When God as a *Lion*, does but *roar* in his threatnings, *who will not fear?* ſays *Amos*, and much more, Pſ. 66. 5. 2 Sam. 6. 9. Acts 5. 11. Amos 3. 8.

Hos. 5. 14 when (as his contemporary Prophet expreſſeth it) he *tears like a young Lion*, does he expect, certainly, Pſ. 2. 11. that all men ſhould *ſerve him with fear*, and even thoſe that *rejoyce before him*, (in the moſt *feſtival* exerciſes of Religion, wherein *joy* was part of the ſervice required) ſhould do it *with trembling?* Thus are *Chriſtian Gentiles* taught, upon conſideration of the noted ſeverities of God towards his former Rom. 11. 20. people the *Jews*, *not to be high-minded, but fear*; as alſo the *Chriſtian Jews*, upon the remembrance of the ſeverities of God towards their fore-fathers under the Law, in the very delivery whereof *Moſes* himſelf ſaid, *I exceedingly fear and quake*; are called on by the ſame *Apoſtle*, to *ſerve him with reverence and godly fear:* as conſidering, that not only Mount *Sinai*, but Mount *Sion* alſo had its thundrings, and the Goſpel its terreurs, as well as the Law: So that offenders *againſt him that ſpeaks from Heaven*, ſhall not eſcape, more than they that *deſpiſed him that ſpake on Earth*; nay, ſhall rather be puniſhed with more ſeverity, becauſe the *God* of Heb. 12. 21. to v. 28. *Chriſtians*, as well as *Jews*, is, if provoked, *a conſuming fire*; and not to be met (as *Iſaiah* expreſſeth it) by *thorns and briars ſet in array againſt him*, Iſa. 27. 4. *leſt he go through them, and burn them together.*

(7.) *Laſtly*, to *improve* that *fear* for our future *Caution*; that taking warning by his noted ſeverities towards others, we give him no occaſion, by the ſame or like provocations, to take us in hand next. But eſpecially, are we to take heed of *thoſe ſins* in particular, againſt which we are evidently convinced God hath given *publique Teſtimonies* by any *remarkable Judgments*. Which is the uſe the *Apoſtle* tells us we ought to make of the great Judgments of God, againſt the old *Iſraelites* left us upon Record in Scripture. *All thoſe things* (which 1 Cor. 10. from 6. to 11. there he reckons up) *befell them*, ſays he, *for examples*,

amples, and were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come: to the intent, as he implies it in ſeveral Inſtances, that we *ſhould not luſt*, or *commit Idolatry*, or *Fornication*, or *tempt Chriſt*, or *murmur*, as they did, for fear of the ſame or like Judgments.

And the like End ſurely God aims at, in thoſe Judgments, which fall out in any Age or part of the world, to admoniſh men to repent of, and for the future, abſtain from thoſe Courſes which (as it were) after violence to his Patience and long-ſuffering, and extort thoſe notable ſeverities from him, by the audacious importunity of their notorious Impieties.

And in all ſuch caſes the *wiſe man* (in *Solomons* Phraſe) *will hear and increaſe in learning*, by fortifying himſelf againſt all Tentations to thoſe ſins, againſt which he ſeeth the *Hand* of God ſo notably *lifted up*. So that if among all the jolly crew of *ſottiſh drunkards*, but now and then one *break his neck* in his drunkenneſs, or by a *cup-quarrel* loſe his life; (though withal many ſuch ſhould eſcape ſuch ends, even ſo many as to give countenance to the *profane Proverb*, that *drunken men come by no harm*) yet the prudent man will lay thoſe *few* contrary Inſtances to heart; and ſay in himſelf, *Why ſhould I not fear, if I deſpiſe ſuch warnings, that I may be made the next Example in that kind?* If there be a ſignal Inſtance in his Age, and within his obſervation of a noted cruel *oppreſſor*, upon whoſe eſtate and houſe the *curſe* of God remarkably deſcends, ſo that his poſterity are either all *buried in death*, *i. e.* die obſcurely, ſo as to be miſſed by ſcarce any body: or if any of them ſurvive, they are *not ſatisfied with bread*; but the great eſtates gotten by unlawful means, melt away like wax before the Sun, e're inherited by the *third Generation*; the ſeri-

Prov. 1. 5.

Job 27. 15, &c.

Prov. 3. 31, 33.

ſerious obſerver will learn, not to *envy him*, *nor chooſe any of his ways*.

If the Examples ſhould be more rare, than in
Luke 15. 39. theſe days they are, of a debauched *Prodigal*, *ſpending all his living with harlots*, and by means of whoriſh women reduced from an ample Eſtate to a
Prov. 6. 26. *piece of bread*: or of ſome other ſinners in the ſame
Prov. 5. 11. kind, whoſe *fleſh and body are conſumed with a loathſom diſeaſe*, thereby *receiving in themſelves* (in the Phraſe of the Apoſtle, concerning uncleanneſs in
Rom. 1. 27. another kind) *that recompence of their errour which was meet*: the conſidering man will ſay with himſelf, *What ſecurity have I, that the ſame ſin, if I follow it, will not reduce me to the ſame Caſe?* If but *the field of a ſluggard be overgrown with thorns, and nettles cover the face thereof*, &c. (*i. e.* his worldly eſtate goes backward for want of honeſt Induſtry)
Prov. 25. 32. a wiſe *Solomon will conſider it, and receive inſtruction.* If the daring and audacious *Appeals* of a bold ſinner to God in fearful *Curſes* upon himſelf; or profane affectations of a new uncouth way of gallantry, by inventing *new Imprecations* againſt himſelf: or the malicious ſhooting of *bitter words* as *arrows* in evil wiſhes againſt others; amongſt men that *love curſing*, do but once or twice in an Age meet with a ſutable ſtroke of Divine ſeverity,
Pſal. 109. 18. and *curſing come into the curſers bowels like water, and as oyl into his bones*: a conſiderate Chriſtian will
Pſ. 39. 1. take heed, that he *offend not thus with his tongue*; and by a ſolemn purpoſe, *as with a bridle, keep his mouth from tranſgreſſing* in that manner.

In a word, when all the *places* of *Execution* in a Nation become *Pulpits*, whence the miſerable Malefactors from their own woful experience, preach *Recantation Sermons*, wherein they renounce the evil Principles they have lived by, and warn all men of the dangerous conſequences of licentious and debauched

bauched Courſes: and the ſame Doctrine be alſo as frequently preached from the *death-beds* of other ſinners, wherein the *curſes written in Gods book* are verified in the eyes and ears of all men, except they wilfully ſhut them both: who, but a deſperately forlorn wretch, will dare *ſay in his heart, I ſhall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine own heart: i.e.* gratifie my own ſinful inclinations to ſatiety, as one that *adds drunkenneſs to thirſt?* Againſt ſuch an one, ſurely, (if any ſuch there be) *the anger of the Lord and his jealouſie may well ſmoke,* yea and *burn* (as he elſewhere threatens) *to the loweſt Hell*; the place appointed for them (ſays the Verſe following my Text) that under ſuch evident *tokens* to *remember* him by, *forget God.* And juſtly may God make them *Examples themſelves,* whom the *Examples* of *others* will not amend: as being guilty of tempting his *Juſtice* beyond all poſſibility of forbearance, by the ungrateful abuſing of that *Patience* that ſhould have *led them to Repentance*; of daring *preſumption* upon that lenity and goodneſs which only hath given them that merciful reprieve, by which their forfeited *ſouls are held in life*; of monſtrous *hardneſs* and *impenitency of heart, whereby they treaſure up to themſelves wrath againſt the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous Judgment of God*; and laſtly, of prodigious *madneſs,* and deſperate *foolhardineſs,* when as (notwithſtanding the fearful Inſtances in all Ages by which God hath taught the world that *none ever hardned himſelf againſt him, and proſpered,* yet) as if they would wreſtle a fall, or fight a duel with the Almighty, *they run upon him even on his neck, and on the thick boſſes of his bucklers.*

Deut. 29. 19, 20.

32. 22.

Pſ. 9. 17.

Pſ. 66. 9.

Rom. 2. 5.

Job 9. 4.

Joh 1 15. 25, 26.

Believe it, ſinner, believe it, (for Truth it ſelf hath ſpoken it) though God ſpare thee a while, and *execute not ſentence ſpeedily againſt thy wicked works*;

Eccleſ. 8. 11.

Neh. 9. 17

Rom. 9. 22. *works*; though he be *ſlow to anger, and endure with much long-ſuffering the Veſſels of wrath fitted for*
2 Pet. 3. 9. *deſtruction*; as not *being willing that any ſhould periſh, but that all ſhould come to repentance:* yet will he not finally ſuffer his holy ſpirit to be vexed, his patience to be trampled upon, his word and its warnings to be deſpiſed, and his Exemplary Executions to be entertained only as news without any farther effect; but *if the wicked turn not, he will*
Pſal. 7. 12. 13. *whet his Sword, he will bend his bow and make it ready, and prepare for him the Inſtruments of death*;
Pſal. 78. 38. and (when he hath *ſtirred up all his wrath*, which yet in his *great compaſſion he* forbears) he will *wound*
Pſal. 68. 21. *the head of his Enemies, and the hairy ſcalp of all ſuch as go on ſtill in their treſpaſſes*; and either here or hereafter make them feel by experience, who without feeling would not believe it, what a *fear-*
Heb. 10. 31. *ful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God.* From which doleful experience God keep us all, for Jeſus Chriſt his ſake. *Amen.*

FINIS.

A Juſt
NARRATIVE,
OR,
ACCOUNT
Of the Man whoſe
Hands and *Legs rotted off:*
In the Pariſh of
KINGS-SWINFORD,
IN
STAFFORD-SHIRE,
Where he died, *June* 21. 1677.

Carefully Collected by
JA. ILLINGWORTH, B. D.
An Eye and Ear-Witneſs of moſt of the material Paſſages in it.

LONDON:
Printed by *A. C.* for *Henry Brome*, at the Gun at the Weſt-end of St. *Pauls*, 1678.

A Just

NARRATIVE,

OR,

ACCOUNT

Of the Man whose

Hands and Legs rotted off:

In the Parish of

KINGSWINGFORD,

IN

STAFFORD-SHIRE,

Where he died, January 1. 1677.

Carefully Collected by

Sir ILLINGWORTH, B. D.

An Eye and Ear-Witness of most of the material Passages in it.

LONDON:

Printed by *A. C.* for *Henry Brewe*, at the Gun at the West-end of St. *Pauls*, 1678.

To the Reverend

S. FORD. D. D.

Rector of

Old-Swinford in *Worceſterſhire.*

SIR,

BEing importuned by divers (Gentlemen, Miniſters, and others of our Neighbourhood) to draw up a full Narrative and Account of that late ſad Providence (which hath filled the hearts and mouths of the Country round about us, the fame whereof is alſo ſpread into remote parts) I was at laſt prevailed with to endeavour their ſatisfaction: And the rather becauſe of a general rumour in the Country, that the man had declared ſeveral things to me of near concernment to himſelf, which he concealed from all other Viſitants. That I might not therefore ſuffer ſuch Reports to paſs uncertain, nor be wanting in that which was by ſome urged as my duty; I did (by travelling, at ſeveral times, above ſixty miles in the parts adjacent) enquire into divers particular circumſtances, which I was not before fully clear in: and have now at laſt ſet all down in plain words (ſutable to ſuch an account) that the meaneſt concerned to

know and make good use of the providence, might at first reading clearly understand it.

Sir, That I address this to you, is, that I may take an opportunity to make my hearty acknowledgments for your learned and useful Discourses *in the* Pulpit *upon this occasion, to the general satisfaction of your Hearers; and I must in my own name, and many of theirs, intreat, you would make the substance of them more publick from the* Press, *that the* Readers *may learn not to be too* censorious *in things of this nature, nor yet to pass by so signal a Providence without that just* Observation *it deserves, and due* reverence *toward that* God *who* is known by the Judgments which he executeth, *as you have fully shewed us. I hope, Sir, I invite you to nothing, but what your own Judgment accounts worthy your labour; and I am confident it will be no mean addition to your former elaborate services of God and his Church. In which that you may be long continued for his Glory, and the good of his People, shall be the hearty Prayer of (Reverend Sir)*

Your most affectionate

(though unworthy Friend)

to honour and serve you,

J. ILLINGWORTH.

A juſt Narrative *or* Account *of the Man whoſe* Hands *and* Legs Rotted off *in the Pariſh of* Kings-Swinford *in* Staffordſhire, *where he Died*, June 21. 1677.

Richard Duncalf of *Codſal* Pariſh, not far from *Wolverhampton*, in the County of *Stafford*, dying many years ſince (and his Wife alſo) left behind them many Children, and but ſlender proviſion for them.

One of their Sons, *John Duncalf*, bound himſelf an Apprentice to *Thomas Gibbons* of *Kings-Swinford* in the ſame County, Wheelwright. When he had ſerved his Maſter two years and ſeven months (or thereabouts) he and his fellow Apprentice ſtealing from their Maſter a conſiderable quantity of Iron, delivered it to a third perſon, who promiſed to conceal it from their Maſter: but being all brought before the Right Honorable the Lord *Ward* of *Dudley-Caſtle*, upon examination ſeverally, they accuſed each other, and confeſſed the whole: By which means there was found concealed (as *Tho. Gibbons* ſaith) 26 pound of old Iron, beſides more that was wrought up, new Waggon-Nails, ends of Bars, *&c.* Upon their Confeſſion the Lord *Ward* ſent them to the Houſe of Correction, about *October* 14. 1675. But the other Apprentice being dangerouſly ſick there, and this

John Duncalf pretending, at leaſt, to be ſick alſo, they two were ſet at liberty the week following. After which time this ſaid *John Duncalf* refuſed to come again to his former ſervice (ſaying he would never ſet his feet in *Kings-Swinford* whilſt he lived) but offering and engaging to pay to his Maſter forty ſhillings, his Maſter and he gave Releaſes to each other: by which means this young man (who was then full twenty years of age, and at more liberty than formerly whilſt an Apprentice) gave himſelf up to licentious courſes, *viz.* (as he confeſſed to me, *April* 26. 1677) to *Idleneſs*, *Stealing*, *Lying*, *Curſing*, *Swearing*, *Drunkenneſs*, *and Uncleanneſs with Women. Which laſt*, he ſaid, *was not by committing actual Fornication or Adultery, but in the thoughts of his heart, and by laſcivious words, and geſtures, whereby he had endeavoured to tempt them to lewdneſs in divers places.* I muſt therefore here clear my ſelf and him from an unjuſt rumour and report common (as I am informed) in the Country hereabouts, which many people yet believe, *viz.* [*That he confeſſed ſome things to me which he deſired might be conceiled whilſt he lived, as, that he had committed a Rape upon a young perſon, and afterward murdered her: That he was guilty of Buggery, or lying with Beaſts*, &c.] I do therefore openly declare to all, that theſe were groundleſs rumors or reports, and I do aſſure them he never deſired me to conceal any thing he ſaid or confeſſed to me, nor did he ever ſpeak to me of any ſuch things as theſe which ſome have reported and others believed. But the faults above-mentioned ſeemed to lie as an heavy burden (upon his Conſcience,) when he judged Gods hand was ſeverely chaſtizing him for them, and all his other impieties; among which his conſtant *profaneneſs* had not been the leaſt, in that, *although he could both read and write, yet he had* (as he ſaid to me)

a long time neglected all manner of Service and Worship of God, as well on the Lords day as other days, and that both in private and publick. It is ſaid, he *ſtole* many things to ſupply his growing neceſſities (which his idleneſs and intemperance brought upon him) chiefly *Bibles*; and the rather becauſe they would ſooneſt be bought by others. About *January* the 6th. 167⅞ coming to the houſe of *Humphrey Babb*, living at the *Grange-mill*, about three miles from *Wolverhampton*, he begged of *Margaret*, the ſaid *Humphrey*'s Wife, Victuals and ſmall drink. The Woman having formerly known him, and compaſſionating his preſent condition, gave him freely ſuch as ſhe had, but whilſt ſhe ſtooped to draw drink for him, he *ſtole her Bible*, (as he confeſſed to her afterwards.) This *Bible* he ſold for three ſhillings to a Maid of *John Downings*, who lives near the *Heath-Forge*, not far from the place where he ſtole it. By which means, not long after, *Humphrey Babb*'s Wife heard of her Bible, demanded it of the Maid that bought it, and making her ſome allowance toward what ſhe paid for it, received it again long before either of them ſaw him, or heard what was become of him: But this being noiſed in the Country thereabouts, one *Henry Evans* told his Father *Thomas Evans* (commonly called *Painter*) who lives near *Henly* or *Himley* (they both knew him) what *John Duncalf* had done: at which the ſaid *John Duncalf*, when he heard of it, was very angry, and gave out threatning words againſt the young man; but being charged with it by them, he did not only deny it with ſome fierceneſs, but execrated and curſed himſelf, *wiſhing his hands might rot off*, if that were true (as the ſaid *Thomas Evans* teſtifies) and *John Bennet* his Keeper, ſaith, he often heard him ſay to Gentlemen that viſited him in his ſickneſs, that he did ſo curſe himſelf upon that occaſion

casion to *Thomas Evans*. And this he acknowledged of his own accord, to me and many others, several times, when he seemed most serious and in earnest [*That he so cursed himself, and that immediately upon the execration or cursing of himself, he had an inward horror or trembling upon him, a dread and fear of the Divine Majesty, and Justice of God, which fear and working of his Conscience continued more or less many days after.*]

When I asked him (upon this ingenious acknowledgment) *why he did not confess his wickedness, and endeavour that the Bible might be restored to the owner?* his answer was, [*That the Devil and his own heart would not suffer him.*] Yet this he acknowledged to me [*That within a few days after that execration his flesh began to look black at the wrists of his hands, and so continued divers weeks before it did sensibly rot.*] He went then and wrought with one *Thomas Osborn* a Joyner in *Dudley*, and (as *Osborn* saith) continued with him about a fortnight (Shrovetuesday being the last day as he well remembers) and that it was the last work that ever he did; which I cannot wonder at, considering what this poor man said to me concerning himself in reference to that time, viz. [*After I had cursed my self about the Bible, I wrought with a* Joyner *at* Dudley; *but at that time I had a fear and trembling upon me, which frequently troubled me, and made me have no great mind to work; and so feeling my self weak and faint, and fearing an Ague or Fever, I went towards my acquaintance, but in the way finding I was unable to go any further, I laid my self down in a Barn (at* Parton-Hall *as I remember) belonging to Sir* Walter Wrotesley, *and there continued two days and nights before I was found.*] (some say he said (at other times) from *Tuesday* night to *Friday* morning.) Being found, he was kept at the charge of the Parish of *Tettenhal* (in which *Parton-Hall* stands) until

the

the next monthly meeting of the *Justices* of the Peace, who (*March* 27. 1677.) by examination finding *Kings-Swinford* to have been the last place of his settlement, made an order he should be carried thither, and maintained by that Parish. There he was received, *March* 28. and *John Bennet* appointed to take care of him: first in a Barn belonging to the *three Crowns*, (an Inn standing on the Road between *Wolverhampton* and *Kidderminster*) and after one fortnight removed by the Overseers for the Poor, to the dwelling house of the said *John Bennet* his Keeper in *Wall-Heath-side*. His flesh at first began to rise in great lumps or knots at the wrists of his hands, and at his knees (as his Keeper tells me) and after a little time to break and run, and shortly after to shrink from the bones at those places, at which time, white putrid matter came out and ran abundantly, causing exquisite pain and torment to this poor man: And so offensive was the smell for several weeks together, that those who came to visit him who were not only many hundreds, but, 'tis believed, thousands (his Keeper and Neighbours say many thousands) were not able to abide in the room with him, nor stand near without the door, except they had herbs or other things at their mouths and noses to smell to. The Visitants being so numerous at all times of the day, especially on the Lords-days, it seemed to give him great disturbance, and made him very unwilling to talk many times, or answer them any thing. They moved him once so far to impatience, when they crowded about him each with a question, having Herbs, and other things at their Noses, that his passion made him to forget his own condition, and wish *their Noses might rot off* (as divers there present assured me;) for which I gently, but seriously, reproved him at my next visit. He seemed to take the reproof well, acknow-

knowledging the fault of his passionate expressions towards them (provoked as he said, by their crowding, impertinent curiosity, and foolish questions; or to that effect:) But he had forgot, or would not confess, that he used those words,—about *their Noses rotting off.*]

But his Keeper tells me, he would often be very impatient towards the multitude, and call to him, saying, *John, why dost thou not dash out their teeth? doest thou not see how they grin at me?* and the like.

About the twentieth of *April* many little Worms came out of the rotten flesh, such as are usually seen in dead Corpses (as his Keeper told me) but after he was well washed and cleansed, those ceased, and the room and smell was nothing so offensive as formerly: yet all that while (though it was rumor'd in the Country) he would never confess his execration, and wishes against himself, until his Keeper denied to ease him of the Vermin, Lice, *&c.* that filled his shirt and doublet, and continually tormented him. He then first promised, that if his Keeper would cut them off and cleanse him, (he had long before cut off all the hair of his head) he would acknowledg the whole truth, which he then did in manner as is before related.

And now he began to beg instruction, and help to repent, and that some Ministers and others, who came to visit him, would pray for and with him, which many did, both publick Preachers and others, at several times; and some who lived near him (as I did) often. Being asked by me what he desired might be begged of God for him, he returned answer to this purpose: *That God would give him repentance, and pardon his sins above-mentioned*, viz. *Idleness, Stealing, Lying, Cursing, Swearing, Drunkenness, unclean Thoughts, and constant Prophaneness, &c.*

that

that he would ſave him for Chriſts ſake, and give him patience in the mean time.] I did accordingly endeavour to repreſent his caſe before God, and with humble earneſtneſs to pray for mercy for him; and he ſeemed at that time to be ſomewhat affected with the Prayer, *&c.*

It was about this time, if I miſtake not, that he ſent for *Humphrey Babb*'s Wife, from whom he ſtole the Bible, ſhe came and brought the Maid he ſold it to, along with her: to them he confeſſed the wrong he had done, and deſired they would forgive him; which the Wife told me ſhe did heartily, and prayed God to forgive him as ſhe did. The Maid ſeemed to be of the ſame mind and Chriſtian temper.

Very many (as I hinted before) hearing of him, came from all parts adjacent, and ſome from places far diſtant, to ſee this ſad ſpectacle of Divine Juſtice: and amongſt the reſt, ſome of the *Romaniſts*, one of which, he and his Keeper ſuppoſed to be a *Prieſt* of that profeſſion, who was earneſt with him to renounce his Religion, and become a *Catholick* (as he called it) and they would remove him, take care to heal his Sores, and (ſaid the man, whom they ſuppoſed to be the Prieſt) *I will pawn my ſoul for thine, that thou ſhalt be ſaved*: which I am informed, is an ordinary form of ſpeech amongſt the *Papiſts* of this Countrey, when they would perſuade men to their party. When I enquired of this poor man (to try him) *why he did not accept of their offers?* he anſwered to this purpoſe, [*To what end? How can he pawn his ſoul for mine? none can ſave me but Chriſt.*]

Others who had occaſion to travel this way from *London*, and other parts far off, Weſt and North, viſited him, we hope not to ſatisfie their curioſity ſo much, as to behold a monument of Divine ſeverity, and that they might bear witneſs, that *although ſentence againſt an evil work is not always executed ſpeedily,*

yet

yet, *God leaves not himself without witness*, in this, as well as former ages, against Atheism and grand impiety.

Upon the eighth of *May* following, both his legs were fallen off at the knees, which the poor man perceived not until his Keeper told him and shewed them to him, holding them up in his hands, and his right hand, hanging only by some ligament, by a little touch of a knife, was taken off also: The other hand at the same time being black as a shooe, and not much unlike, in the fancy of some, for roughness and hardness, to the outside of a dried Neats-tongue. This hand hanged on a long time afterwards by some such thing as the former, and might ('tis possible) have continued in that manner until his death, if he had not desired his Keeper to take that away also as the former, because it was troublesome to him. Now although putrid matter frequently issued out at those places, yet he had not so much pain as he had formerly for a *month* or *six weeks*, as he freely confessed; and acknowledged that his stomach was good, and did digest such meats as he took, and that he had evacuations by siege and urine, as heretofore in his health.

So that, continuing in this condition some weeks, many began to think the Issues might be stopped, and his life preserved many years, if regularly ordered. Some of the Parishioners were moved in it, that Physicians and Surgeons might be consulted, and good advice taken in the case; but I cannot learn that any thing was done about it, being judged by some, incurable. It is said that he expressed himself to some that visited him in this manner. [That *now the curse wherewith he had cursed himself being fully come to pass (in that his hands were rotted off) he was perswaded it would go no further.*] But he forgot that God punished him, not for that sin only,

but,

but, for all his great tranſgreſſions (though for that chiefly) as he formerly confeſſed to me, he believed. At laſt his fleſh began to waſt, and his ſpirits to fail; ſo that viſiting him again, and obſerving ſome change in his fleſh and countenance more than formerly, I laboured to convince him more fully of his condition, and to perſuade him to look up to the great Phyſician, in whoſe hands are the iſſues of life and death, &c. He ſeemed to give diligent attention, and earneſtly deſired me to pray with him; after prayers, when I was about to leave him for that time, he deſired I would not forget him in my prayers; making it alſo his earneſt requeſt, that I would come again when ever he ſhould ſend for me, which I promiſed I would at any hour day or night. This was *June* 16. and on the 19. (as his Keeper acknowledgeth) he was in great anguiſh and trouble of mind, crying out [*What ſhall I do to ſave my poor ſoul?*] with many other expreſſions to the ſame purpoſe; being very ſick, and fearing his approaching death. But upon what account his Keeper would not ſend for me (in whoſe hearing he ſo earneſtly deſired me to come to him) he knows beſt, and muſt anſwer it, if it was his fault for private reſpects, as is conjectured. On *June* 21. in the morning, I went again to viſit him, unſent for, but found him unſenſible, and paſt any further advice. I ſtaid by him until almoſt noon. He lay ſtill, with his eyes fixed, as a dying man, moved not at any thing we ſaid to him, but upon pouring into him a little drink with a ſpoon at ſeveral times, he coughed a little, and groaned, and then lay as before. When I ſaw there was no probability he would underſtand any thing I ſaid, I left him (after prayer made for him with the company there preſent, in the houſe) and had notice brought me, that he died about two hours after my departure from him.

But

Before I ſum up the whole of this Narrative, and account of his condition, I judge it may be acceptable to the Reader to inſert ſome ſhort Obſervations, communicated to me by an ingenious Gentleman, our Neighbour, who ſeveral times viſited him in his affliction. Take them therefore in his own words.

"When I firſt ſaw this young man (which was "quickly after he was brought into *Kings-Swinford*) "he appeared to me to be of a vigorous ſtate of body, "and of an healthy conſtitution, ſaving the ſtrange "defect under which he laboured, his hands and legs "being then deprived of ſenſe and motion. I ob- "ſerved them, and handled him: They were from "both wriſts and knees blackiſh and dying; and I "took notice, that about each wriſt and knee there "was as it were a *Circle* at the joynt that divided "the ſound from the dying parts, and ſeemed like a "ligature, prohibiting any nouriſhment to paſs thoſe "bounds; ſo that the blood and ſpirits being won- "derfully ſtopped in their circulation, it muſt ne- "ceſſarily follow, that the parts thus deprived of "their wonted ſupply, muſt wither and die as a leaf "in Autumn: which ſad progreſs they made till "both hands and legs from the wriſts and knees be- "came dead and dried, black and hard, like Mum- "my, before they fell off at the joynts, which they "afterward did. I alſo obſerved, that at the firſt, "above each of the forementioned circles, there "brake out a ſore, at which the nouriſhing juyce "(deſigned by nature to have fed thoſe parts) em- "ptied it ſelf (now in thoſe ſores corrupted) in a "*quitture* or *ſanies*, ſo horribly ſtinking, that few of "his Viſitants could well endure the room without "ſome ſtrong ſmelling defenſative. But viſiting "him after thoſe dead limbs were fallen from the "body (all but one hand which was almoſt ſevered) "I ſaw the joynts with the fleſh look well and heal-

thy.

"thy. They ſeemed to me free and untouch'd by "the former mortification, being quick and ſenſi- "ble, that now the fellow complained upon the "leaſt touch thereof, yet ſeeming to promiſe an ea- "ſie cure, for that ichorous ſtinking humor was "gone; the fleſh was raw, but ſweet, and here and "there beſmeared with a thick corrupt *pus*, an en- "couraging ſign (ſay Artiſts) that ſores incline to "healing: But this poor creature wanting all help "from Art or Medicine, ſave what the application "of the leaves of Mullein afforded, which by his "Keeper were uſed to defend the raw parts; in ſome "weeks there iſſued the like thin and ſtinking hu- "mor as before, which ſoon put a period to his life. *So far my Friend.*

As to the young man himſelf, he was (as he told me a few days before he died) about *twenty two* years of age. It was eaſie to obſerve, he had been a ſtrong young man, naturally of a ſtubborn temper, much hardened by evil courſes; yet he ſeemed ſometimes to be affected with his condition, the diſcourſes made to him, and prayers with him; and I wiſh I might have had from him as clear an evidence of a comfortable change wrought in him, as I would gladly have told the world. I muſt in charity leave his final condition to God, who thus afflicted and chaſtized him for the ſpace of near about *four months*, that he might be a ſignal ſpectacle to thouſands, of Gods diſpleaſure againſt impiety.

The ſum of all is this, That a ſtrong, luſty, young man, as moſt in the County where he was born, being unfaithful to God and his Maſter, and giving himſelf to licentiouſneſs and wickedneſs, was brought to a morſel of bread; and by doing evil and denying it with execrations, had a ſting and ſecret remorſe in his conſcience, by which, and want (the fruit of his idleneſs and intemperance) he

grew

grew faint and weak, and his hands waxed feeble: not being able to work, designed to betake himself to his Friends, but was stopped by the way, forced to lie down under the hand of God, that the *Curse* wherewith he had cursed himself might *come upon him*; and so by the stupendious providence of God he was made a spectacle to the world of Divine severity many weeks, that others might *see, and hear, and fear, and do no more wickedly.* And I wish, God may have no reason to say to any, (as by the Apostle in another case, *) *---Behold ye despisers, and wonder and perish: for I work a work in your days, which you shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.*

* Acts 13. 41.

FINIS.

SIR,

Being requested by Mr. Illingworth *to give you an account of what I am able to say concerning* John Duncalf, *I apprehend the best way is by a bare and brief* Narrative *of that discourse that passed between us whilst I was with him; if there is any thing worth your cognizance, you may make use of it as you please.*

Our Discourse was as followeth.

May 1st. 1677.

Quest. *Speaking to him of the deplorableness of his Condition, and that sure there was a more than ordinary hand of Gods Providence in it arising from some evil act or actions of his.*

Answ. Answered yes, 'twas for his sins.

Quest. *When I told him that sin was generally the procuring Cause of every mans sufferings; but under such remarkable and dreadful sufferings as these were, there is usually one or more special sins to be inquired after, as the neareſt procuring Cause or Causes.*

Answ. He answered yes; so it was in his case. He stole a Bible from a Woman, and being charged with it, denied it with this fearful wish, [*That his Hands might rot off if he stole it.*]

Quest. *Then I asked him, whether his hands began to blacken, or change Colour, or tingle, &c. presently after the imprecation, or that fearful wish of his?*

Answ. Answer'd no; but his Conscience tingled sadly.

Quest. John, *how long was it e're your hands began to rot, or had any signs of putrefaction upon them after the Curse?*

Answ. About a fortnight.

Queſt. *Have you made your peace with God for ſo great an offence?*

Anſw. [Being a man not apt to ſpeak, and ignorant withal] made little anſwer, only ſhaked his head.

Queſt. *Have you asked the Woman forgiveneſs, and to your power endeavoured to make ſatisfaction; or if the Bible were in your hands, to make Reſtitution?*

Anſw. Yes, he did ſend for her, and ſhe came accordingly, and prayed God forgive him, for ſhe did.

Queſt. John, *canſt pray? I have not found in thee any motions or inclinations thereunto ſince I came.*

Shakes his head again, and nothing he ſaid.

Queſt. John, *doſt thou know how at ſo great a diſtance as ſin hath made thee, to go to the Father?*

Anſw. Yes, by Jeſus Chriſt, whiſpering it ſoftly, yet ſo as I might hear him.

Queſt. *Then fearing he did not underſtand what Chriſt hath done for the World, I very briefly opened to him the Tenor and*

Conditions of the Covenant of Grace, and ſo how he muſt expect Mercy at the hands of God.

Anſw. Then (ſo far as I could gueſs) he began ſomewhat to relent, for the Tears trickled down his cheeks, and many Symptoms of conviction and ſorrow ſeemed to be upon him; ſaying theſe words, or to this purpoſe: For Gods ſake, Sir, pray for me.

Queſt. John, *I am glad to ſee ſome, though the leaſt tokens of penitence in thee ----- The Lord enlarge thine heart, and make thy Conſcience tender ----- I am willing*, John, *to pray for thee, and ſo I perceive is this whole company: But it would be great ſatisfaction to us, if you would acquaint us, what we ſhould more particularly deſire of God on your account.*

Anſw. Good Sir, that my ſins may be pardoned, as loſs of Time, neglect of Duty, and the ſervice of God.

Queſt. *Is not Sabbath-breaking one?*

Anſw. O yes, yes!

Queſt. *Have you any thing elſe to ſay?*

Anſw. No. Then let us pray. ---

Ending

Ending with the Lords Prayer, he repeated the Petitions after me, saying *Amen*, with somewhat an elevated voice; being observed to weep several times whilst we continued prayer.

After which I parted with him, making me to promise him the continuation of my Prayers.

About a fortnight after he sends a Messenger to me to tell me he desired my company again; at which time I made it my business not so much to ask him Questions, as to inform him of those Truths that as I thought had a necessary conducency to our eternal peace. [Spending some hours with him that day, as I could bear the noysom stench that then came from him.] Before I came away that time, which was the last time that I saw him; his Keeper told me, that a Popish Priest had been with him some few days before, earnestly endeavouring to proselyte him to their Religion; using this Argument: That if he would turn *Roman Catholick*, I will

pawn

pawn my Soul to thy Soul thou shalt be saved. But all he could obtain of the poor man, was only this, that he would consider of it. Then asking *John Duncalf*, whether this was true? He answered, Yes. Praying with him, I took my final leave and farewell. This is all (worthy Sir) that I know concerning him. I can only add that I am

Your most humble Servant,

Kinsare, Aug. 17. 1677.

JONATH. NEWEY.

We

WE whose Names are hereunto ſubſcribed, living in the Neighbourhood of *Kings-Swinford*, where *John Duncalf* the ſubject of the preceding *Narrative*, whilſt Gods hand was ſo ſeverely upon him, for the moſt part reſided; and having moſt of us viſited him and diſcourſed him in that condition, and the reſt of us received frequent Informations of the Paſſages herein mentioned from a multitude of credible Witneſſes; do (in order to the rendring ſo uſeful a *Relation* more creditable ſo far as we are known) atteſt, that we judge it to be very exactly and impartially penned in all the particulars: and eſpecially, in thoſe Paſſages of it which contain the frequent *ſerious acknowledgements* of the mentioned *John Duncalf*, (*That he did imprecate that Judgment upon himſelf which is here expreſſed, and upon the occaſion here related*) which he made

not

not only in the hearing of the Author, but also of most of us: as also, in the substance of those that relate the *rotting off of his Hands and Legs* before his death, in the manner herein mentioned. And this *attestation* we make with no other design, but that God may have the glory, and the world the benefit of so *Exemplary a Providence.* For which end we as heartily accompany this *Narrative* with our prayers, as with our hands.

Simon Ford, D. D.
Tho. Wilsby.
Amb. Sparry.
John Raynolds.
Samuel Mountfort.
Edward Paget.